

The Challenge of Logos's Final Says

by George Verwer

The MV Lagos incident serves as a reminder of the importance of prayer and trust in God's sovereignty, even in the face of adversity.

Duration: 1:09:28

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 6:2

Topics: "Missions"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker reflects on a news event that occurred in the Beagle Channel. The speaker heard the news while on a plane between New York and London and was relieved to learn that no one was injured. The speaker ponders the mysteries of life and acknowledges that there are both good and bad times. They emphasize the importance of being able to rejoice and praise God in times of blessing, but also to stand firm and fight during difficult times. The speaker also mentions the loss of two men in Bangladesh and expresses gratitude for the work that God has done.

Transcript

We really want to honor God, that's our great burden. We'll all be sharing a little about the ship and some of the things that have happened. Above all else, we just want to honor God.

A lot of people have been phoning me and extending their sympathy, their encouragement, but when we think, especially because they feel, of course, we've gone through a great trial, and we have, but you know, when we think of some of the other suffering in the world tonight, it just makes us look very, very small. And I've always had this commitment, though I'm somewhat of an emotional character, that my final vote has to be with my mind. And my mind tells me that God wants to use this to just alert us to all the crises that are going on in the world, and just enable us to see beyond our own struggles, our own family situations, and face up to what's happening among those Afghan refugees, four million of them, face up to what's happening in Iran, in Iraq.

If that war was taking place here in Europe, can you imagine it would be equal to the Second World War, almost? But because it's out there, we sort of leave it out there, though there have been 300,000 slaughtered, and even at this moment, Iran is building up for what may be one of the greatest military invasions in history, with a quarter of a million forces, a quarter of a million, many of them teenagers, who are hallucinated with the thought of martyrdom. And we know all over the world there are just awesome things taking place. We got through our crisis without hardly a finger scratched.

Unlike the exaggerated articles in some of the newspapers, no one was plucked from the ship, they all very calmly got into the lifeboats and went off and were picked up by the Chilean Navy, who was already standing by. And all of them are safe. Some are in Chile, some are in Argentina.

Some of our leaders, especially Dale Roton, who coordinates the ship ministry, are down there. And we are just rejoicing that God gave us 17 and a half years of ministry with this ship, 17 sailing years. It's just about this time, 17 years ago, she sailed from Rotterdam to London.

And those of you who get the international ship letter from OM here in the UK will be reminded of that. As I was traveling from Rotterdam to London, I typed up one of the early prayer letters. And so I typed up a prayer letter this last week, which will go out to our praying people and friends around the world, including a number of you.

So let's just pray together before we launch into some other thoughts and burdens. Our God, we believe that your ways are past finding out. We pray often for people.

We see one healed, we see another one die. We pray often for ministries. We see one go ahead with great success, we see another one disappear.

We have prayed for this ship, launched out of Europe way back in 1970, 71. And we have seen that ship minister in over 400 ports, over 100 nations, touching 50, 70 million people. We've lost track.

Bringing tens of thousands to some kind of commitment. And we just give you thanks for all that you have done. And we would like this service together, for there even be a time of thanksgiving and a time of praise for what you have done through that ship, which was once just right here, down the coast in Shoreham, and which now is there, two-thirds submerged in the seas of that channel, Beagle Channel, in the southernmost tip of South America.

Father, we give you the praise and the glory. We honor you. We worship you.

And we trust you, Lord, to use this event to speak to people. We know a majority of people who have gone up the gangway of the ship, especially in Britain. That was it.

They never wrote. They never took an interest. It was just an event.

We pray that somehow as the news has come over television and radio and newspapers, and as we consider perhaps replacing this ship, that many more would get involved in praying, in giving, in going. We look to you, Lord, to bless us tonight as we minister together, as we worship together. In Jesus' name, Amen.

We've been on the phone with a very, very godly woman named Marjorie Foyle, asking her for some wisdom and counseling ideas as our pastors and counselors are there in South America to counsel people who have been through quite a traumatic experience. And some of them are now feeling the aftermath of that experience. They're not sleeping.

They're getting reruns of the collision of the ship. This is the woman that God has been using to help many of the Lord's wounded soldiers. And there are many wounded soldiers.

We're not going to go forward to battle and not have any wounded soldiers. And so here's a book you may want to give to someone you know who's been wounded in the battle of spiritual life or of missionary work.

It's called Honorably Wounded Stress Among Christian Workers.

It's a very real factor. If I hadn't learned years ago how to deal with stress, and I'm still learning, I wouldn't be here. I definitely would not be here.

And among Christian leaders, the stress factor has taken more men and more women than any other factor I can think of, including impurity, including car collisions, or whatever else. So I'm excited about this book. It's a serious book, but it's one that you may want to take a look at.

There are also just a few leaflets about Lagos. This is the new program for 1988. As you look at this and what Lagos was planning to do, you will realize it's not something we would print now, but it was already printed.

And it's the one major piece of literature. And it will be, I think, of interest, even though anything in here in connection with Lagos will have to be changed. We're hoping some of these things will be done by our Lagos Latin American shore teams.

One of the main goals for 1988 was the entire rebuilding of Lagos. We were going to put 125,000 pounds sterling into this ship. We only paid 70,000 for it.

To make it more useful, because from the day we got it, it was always too small. We could never fit the people in. That's one of the reasons we got in Toulouse.

Well, the Lord has saved us. All that work. All that effort.

And there are many people feel, one man called me today from Canada about it, that really what God wants, it may not be immediately, but what God may want is a larger ship. So that's something you will find interesting. I don't have enough for everyone.

And if they run out, you can write, and we'll send you one. Let me just take a little more time now to share what happened to the MV Lagos. This is my first public meeting since this catastrophe.

We're talking about a 3,000-ton ocean-going ship. And I'm sure some of you don't know much about it, and that's perfectly understandable. You probably saw something about Argentinian pilots.

Almost every major newspaper in the country has covered this story. All the major news media has covered this story. They're still covering it even this morning.

When they found out one little factor about the pilot, which was significant, somehow they grabbed on to that. The pilot, or pilots, we're still trying to find out whether there's one or two. I thought there was only one.

Never heard of two pilots. But there may have been two. Requested permission to leave the ship early, supposedly because it was getting windy and they were concerned about getting home.

And our captain did give them, on request, official permission to leave early. They charted out a route, which supposedly was one of the more difficult routes. They did not route us, you know, into a rock.

But supposedly they gave a route that was a little more difficult. Well, we took this route, and I guess with the high winds, this, of course, is being investigated by both the Chilean and Argentinian government

because we are on a rock in disputed water. They don't even know who the rock belongs to.

The rock is being claimed by both countries. Now they will both probably claim it is not their rock. But it was just before midnight on the 5th, I hope I got that date right, that the ship seemingly just slid onto a rock.

It wasn't a huge collision all of a sudden. It just got on this rock. There was a scraping.

There wasn't a large, you know, a large tremendous shaking of the ship, but a tremendous scraping. Captain ordered people into preparatory stage, danger stage, whatever you would call it, not to abandon ship but to be ready with life jackets in the dining room. And they spent several hours just praying, singing as crew members worked on trying to free the ship from the rock.

But with the way the water was, things actually got worse. And soon the water was coming into the ship. And in the early hours of the morning, the shipper, of course, went into a list.

In the early hours of the morning, it was 15 or 20 degree list when they abandoned ship. This is down in the very, very southernmost part of South America, south of Tierra del Fuego, what's called Fireland. It is one of the most dangerous shipping areas in the world, but much more so in the winter.

It is summer there right now. And it was in this channel. Can someone remember the name of the channel? I've had it on my mind.

Beagle Channel. They were getting toward the end of the channel. That this event took place.

I heard the news. This actually happened when I was in an airplane between New York and London. I heard the news when I arrived.

And there was, of course, with it, the immediate news that no one was injured. So though I broke down and started weeping, I think I was weeping for joy more than for sorrow. I'm the kind of character that weeps more easily in very joyous events.

If I watch a film and everything's going wrong, and then suddenly a totally unpredictable happy ending, like Billy Graham's film Time to Run, that's what causes my tears to really flow. You see, because I'm one of the characters that expected far worse than this over these 17 years. Someone wrote me and said, Oh, I guess you never thought of this.

Poor soul. He must have a very, very poor imagination. I've lived on this ship.

And I know something about dangers at sea. And, of course, many, many times I've dreamed of terrible things happening. People say, Well, where's your faith in God? Well, my faith in God is built on this book.

Maybe your faith in God is built on some fantasy that somebody's throwing you from some other kind of book. Because there's no place in this book that tells us, as God's people, we are not going to suffer. There's no place that tells us it's all going to be well.

In fact, the Word of God teaches quite the opposite. And if you just read the Scriptures, in both the Old and the New Testament, you will see that God allows His people to be tried to the very bone. Why do we have such a large book in the Old Testament called Job? What a waste of paper.

How downright depressing. The average evangelicalist has never even read it. We're very caught up with the Psalms.

Hallelujah, I'm caught up in the Psalms. But where do we get the basis that the Psalms are the only inspired part of the Old Testament? Maybe you want to write a chorus on Job and bring the church back into a little bit of biblical balance. And the suffering that I have seen just in my lifetime would make it folly for me to just somehow claim that everything we do in OM will never, you know, never run into any difficulty.

In fact, we had an automobile accident years ago that took four people. We had one in the very beginning of our work 20 years ago that took two of my closest friends. Both directors of the work in the UK were killed simultaneously in Poland.

And we've had many, many other tragedies because we've been involved with over 40,000 people on OM for 30 years. And the law of averages, a term I do not like, and I believe through prayer we can shift, hallelujah, the law of averages, we are going to face suffering. Of course we pray against these things.

Of course we ask for extra-angelic assignment to watch over the ship. And we believe that God understands our burdens in our prayers and in fact has given us far more years with this ministry than we ever expected. In fact, there was only one man on the ship who began in the ship ministry 17 years ago.

The ministry goes back six years before that because there were six years of prayer and planning and praying before the actual first ship came into being. We just celebrated the 10th anniversary of the doulos. I could hardly believe it when they sent me this news because it just doesn't seem that long ago that God gave us our second ship, a ship of 6,000 tons with over 300 people.

And I really would appreciate your prayers for doulos right now. Can you imagine? This news hit them out there along the Indian coast, the captain, the officers, because sometimes it's helpful for the young people if they don't believe this can ever happen to them. You know what I mean? When they're young in the Lord, maybe God lets them be a little bit naive, otherwise they wouldn't even join the project.

But I can tell you when that news comes to the doulos that Lagos is sunk, and doulos is much older than Lagos. The newer ship has gone down. Built in 1949, doulos was built in 1914.

Of course, the age of the ship, as far as we can ascertain, had nothing to do with this particular accident. And in fact, with doulos, almost nothing is left of the original ship. Almost nothing is left of the original ship.

You know, it's like a bionic person. And, you know, as if we took Charles, and over the years we just put all kinds of new parts, and so Charles is here, but nothing left of the original Charles. That doesn't happen with people spiritually.

Of course, something happens along that line. It was in the morning that they abandoned ship. It went very, very well.

There was no panic. They had practiced this many times. It was dangerous because a 20-degree lift, often you cannot launch the lifeboats.

But lifeboats went down on both sides. People got in them and rowed away like that to these nearby Chilean vessels where they were taken on board and brought to shore. When we first heard it, we thought

the ship was just within 24 hours going to be sunk completely beneath the water.

But she landed on a big rock shelf. And that's where she is right now, about two-thirds submerged. In fact, two of our men spent the night on the ship two nights ago, including this man, Dave Thomas, the one who's the chief engineer who's been in this project and on this ship from the very beginning.

Pray for him especially and his wife and children. And the captain. Of course, the captain feels a great degree of responsibility.

And it's probably the most awesome thing that can happen to a captain. But you know, he's a man who knows and loves the Lord Jesus. When I spoke to him on the phone, it did seem to me that he was appropriating the grace for surely one of the most difficult experiences in life.

And pray for others as we, our pastoral staff and our leaders, will be interviewing everybody to see whether they want to stay down there for a while and work on the program on shore or whether they want to be relocated on the other ship or in one of our home offices or go home for a while. We've already begun to see some money come in to help in what we call the Lagos aid to try to work out the many, many, many details of this particular crisis. I want to thank you for praying.

I want to thank you as a church for praying because some of you have been involved in this ministry from the very early days. You know, if something like this had happened in that first or second year when we did not have the credibility, we did not have the kind of organizational structure and partnerships and everything that we have today, a movement now almost 30 years old, it would have been just almost overwhelming beyond perhaps what we could have handled. And I thought about it many times as my wife and I lived on that ship during those early years when I was both director of the Lagos as well as director of OM.

And God, in His mercy, took us around Africa and out to India, back again to, you may have read in the papers, over 400 ports in these 17 years to over 104 nations of the world. It's just incredible. It's an incredible story.

A book actually is being written about it right now by Elaine Roton, the wife of the ship ministry coordinator. As we move toward the future, one of our great burdens is for the Dulas ministry out in Asia. Another one of our greatest burdens is that as a lot of attention now is being focused on Lagos, which is normal, that this will not detract from any other aspect of God's work.

For example, we would never want someone to send to the Lagos aid fund money that was to go to their regular missionary support. This would be unacceptable to us. We would not want our own work in the Muslim world, 250 people.

The subcontinent, 450 people. With a ship, 700 people full-time in the subcontinent right now. Somehow, as Lagos gets the focus of attention, we would not want these other aspects of the work to be neglected.

It's one of a number of reasons that I'm not in Chile or Argentina right now. A number of our other directors are. I have to leave in 10 days for Hong Kong, for Dulas, for Australia and Pakistan.

And since I've been away so much from my wife, who's not well, and my family, I felt, especially since no one had been killed or hurt, that I should let other people fly there and handle that situation. And that's one of the reasons I can be with you as well. I'd like now to have an open time of prayer in which several of

you, perhaps some of you who have been linked with this ministry, could just lead in a brief prayer.

Now, someone may have a really long prayer, just sense the Holy Spirit's given you a really long prayer. I don't want to inhibit anybody, but if you could just step out in the parking lot and pray that prayer, you're great. Or you could go in a vestry.

But as we just have this little short time of open prayer, just pray briefly, so a number of people, men or women, can pray. For the ship, for the staff. And let us make this a little service of thanksgiving.

I've heard that in Northern Ireland, a number of our crew are from Northern Ireland, they've organized tonight in one church a service of thanksgiving. The news of this event has gone around the world more than, you know, anything in the entire history of OM. In fact, any 20 things we could put together.

You know, we didn't organize this. As you know, OM is not a great publicity-seeking movement. We're usually low-profile people, and the ships, perhaps, have always been somewhat different when they actually come into a port.

But let's pray that God will use this news to stir His people to prayer, and to greater vision, and whatever other way He wants to. I would appreciate prayer for the many meetings I have in Australia. I haven't been there much, only five days, six days.

It was quite a big response. We're getting quite a few key staff from Australia. We will be going there for almost four weeks of meetings.

The news is already there, of course, in the press. Pray that somehow the Lord uses that. Australia has a lot of potential for sending out missionaries, but there's only a small increase, number of missionaries coming out from that part of the world.

And then I'll be on Dulas, in a nation that has gone through suffering that makes our little crisis look very small indeed. The awesomeness of the Sri Lankan almost civil war, the Indian so-called peacekeeping force, which was like almost an invasion. So many people dead, maimed, blown apart in Sri Lanka.

That's where Dulas is going. And I just read on the way down here, one of the reasons I can take so many meetings each year is I can work in my car as good as I can work in my office. I even now have a phone in my car.

And that's been a great answer to prayer. But as I was coming here, I read about Sri Lanka. They're giving us the Queen Elizabeth birth, writing Colombo, all permissions, book distribution, program, the works.

And I'm looking forward to being on Dulas. I've been there many times on Lagos. But as this news goes around the world, you know, Satan can try to use it.

Let's really pray and cover that with our prayer. So let's just have a time of prayer, one after another, leading in prayer, intelligent prayer. God, guide us now as we pray together.

In a time of intercession and thanksgiving, we ask in Jesus' name. Amen. Father, we just want to thank you from the bottom of our hearts that when people see their TV screens and normally with any disaster, there's loss of life or some injury associated with it, that this time it was different.

Father, we thank you for that BBC summary headline, shipwreck, all safe. And we just pray that that very fact might burn itself into the experience of those who don't even think about you. Lord, cause them to ask themselves, why should it be different? And Lord, may you use that to stir them up to their responsibility as far as you're concerned because we ask it in your name.

Amen. Yes. Lord, we rejoice that in your service, Lord, a disaster becomes a triumph.

And we thank you, Lord, that it was truly a triumph that all was saved. And we pray, Lord, that you will continue, that this work shall go on. Go on to your praise and glory, Lord, that truly it shall resound throughout the world that our God moves, and he moves in a triumphant way.

Thank you, Lord, in your blessed name. Hallelujah. Thank you, Lord.

Lord, we pray for the pilot of him. And we ask that you will continue to give him the grace to face up to the consequences. Lord, will you be with him, give him your peace.

Amen. Father, we lift these matters to thee. It's good to have a sense of rejoicing, a sense, Lord, of your presence.

You are handling beyond our conception. And we just cry to thee, our God, that everything, all works out in glory for him. We commend to thee the Jew, Lord.

We commend to thee our brother and his wife, who has a great need at this time. And we would ask you will further the gospel, Lord, in your strange way. And we magnify thee again for the safe rescue of these men and women.

We give you thanks in Jesus' name. Amen. Oh, God, yes.

Hallelujah. Lord, we thank you too for the ministry that that ship has been throughout the world. And the many thousands of people who have come to know you because of it.

That's right. We thank you too. It's been such a marvelous work of distributing your literature amongst people.

Lord, that they may come into that knowledge. Lord, it's a blessing that you've used it for your glory. Yes, Lord.

Father, we thank you that when the folk had to abandon Logos, it's been very evident that you had not abandoned them. That you were with them. You protected them.

And, Father, we pray for those on the Dudos that, Lord, they will really understand this truth, that you are not a God who abandons. That even when we go through times of trial and testing, you promise to be with us. You promise to give us the strength to take us through.

And as you have been and as you are now, being a source of strength and encouragement to those at this time who are still going through various traumas in the aftermath, that, Lord, indeed, that the folk on Dudos, Lord, that this, instead of shaking their faith, will indeed strengthen them and cause them to go on even more spreading your gospel. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Amen. We do thank you, Lord. Do you answer prayer.

We're trusting you to turn, as we've already seen you, this whole situation around. We do uphold Jonathan Stewart, the captain. Tom Dyer, the first officer.

Dave Thomas, the chief engineer. Brother Alam from India, first engineer. We just believe, Lord, all these crew, the ones that are still down by the ship and all that's involved in that.

We're trusting you to work these out. These details out in Jesus' name. Amen.

I might just add just a few other comments about the ship and then we're going to look into the Word of God. That we, 17 years ago, looked at the possibility of getting insurance on the hull of the ship. Then we looked at insurance of the cargo.

The cost of insurance was so huge per year that we just couldn't see ourselves to paying that kind of money out. Because that still wouldn't insure the most important thing. That's the people.

And the complexity of insuring the people is also quite overwhelming and is left to each individual within OM to seek out what they feel best is in their situation. But we did, four years ago, finally decide to take out a third party insurance. We had, I think, something before that was not suitable.

And so, if our ship ever runs into another ship or a dock or another person or anyone else, just like some of you may have only third party car and vehicle insurance, we are covered. The ship is almost surely being, they're asking us to move the ship to Chile. It's in Chilean waters, so there is this dispute.

And our insurance will cover the moving of the ship. Would cover the salvaging of the ship. But the nearest place where we can take it is a thousand miles.

Where there is any kind of proper dock. We've had the word, the ship is salvageable but not repairable. Technical.

So, the possibility is that she has to be moved, taken out to deep water and buried in the deep. Probably, you know, hundreds and hundreds of years from now when they've got high tech equipment and they can raise things up. There will be a great story, for not all with the Lord by then, of the raising of the Lagos.

But do pray as there is still a lot to be done. And we have another emergency meeting of the board of directors. The ship is owned by a British board.

It's all part of Operation Mobilization. One of many companies within OM because things have to be done legally. And we'll be meeting in London again tomorrow to discuss and pray through all of these things.

Even our insurance broker who helped sell us that third party said in terms of stewardship of the money entrusted to us that we have not done an unwise thing of not insuring the haul and the cargo these last 17 years. I might just insert here that a movement like OM, the size we are, it is becoming increasingly complex, the function on this planet. Many countries have so many laws and rules.

The kind of simple lifestyle we were committed to and still are to some degree is now almost illegal in many countries by law. So we really need prayer, not just for our ship that represents about 5-7% of our personnel, the ship Lagos, but the whole ministry. Turn with me in your Bibles.

As all of you know, I've been coming around here for quite a few years and just like all of you, I'm getting older. And I now have to use these to read my Bible, which is quite an embarrassment for me because I

always thought I had such good eyes. But my wife gets great kicks out of it all.

2 Corinthians chapter 6. I'm going to get a big print Bible, then I won't need them. 2 Corinthians chapter 6. I love this passage of Scripture. Let the Word of God... I'm not going to be able to expound all this.

You won't go home till midnight. Let the Word of God just speak to your heart. He wants to feed us from His Word.

He wants to build us up. As God's fellow workers... I'm reading from the New International Version. As God's fellow workers, we urge you not to receive God's grace in vain.

For He says, I tell you, now is the time of God's favor. Now is the day of salvation. We put no stumbling block in anyone's path so that our ministry will not be discredited.

Rather, as servants of God, we commend ourselves in every way. In great endurance. Isn't that beautiful? That's what I need.

In troubles. In hardships. In distresses.

In beatings. In imprisonments. In riots.

In hard work. Ooh. Sleepless nights.

Hunger. Impurity. Understanding.

Patience. Kindness. In the Holy Spirit.

In sincere love. In truthful speech. In the power of God with weapons of righteousness in the right hand and in the left.

Through glory and dishonor. Bad report and good report. Genuine yet regarded as imposters.

Known yet regarded as unknown. Dying and yet we live. We live on.

Beaten yet not killed. Sorrowful yet always rejoicing. Poor yet making many rich.

Having nothing. And yet possessing everything. We have spoken freely to you, Corinthians.

And open wide our hearts to you. We are not withholding our affection from you. But you are withholding yours from us.

As fair exchange, I speak as to my children. Open wide your hearts also. Open wide your hearts also.

That's what God wants us to do. Even in these remaining moments together here in this time of worship and thanksgiving. To open our hearts.

What does God want to say to us through this incident? That in a rather unusual way has received so much publicity here in Britain. In fact, easily in the next week, you can surely use this to open a door of witness. And all you have to do, even those of you who are the most low-profile witnesses that the Lord ever had, is say, have you heard about that ship in South America? Probably they have.

And then you can maybe tell them something about it. You can tell them that the man who had the idea in the first place was speaking at your church. I'll never forget it.

It was in a converted pub in Bolton, Lancashire. I had taken vehicles across the channel in the summer of 62 when Owen was being born. About 12, the next summer, it was 100 vehicles.

I had known about, of course, the fact that one of the best ways to get to India was by sea. Our teams had already traveled overland. And various things came together as a small group of us got onto this subject of ships.

And it just rang in my mind that this could be something that God could use. I shared it with a few people. This was 64 or 65, Bolton, Lancashire.

This pub was converted into a Christian bookshop. And a few people laughed. Others thought, well, you know.

Other people, of course, thought it was crazy. So I didn't push it. I wrote a memo on how to use ocean-going ships in world evangelism and just quietly circulated that to a few hundreds.

I then immediately went off to Sweden to look at some ships and discovered these ships, older ships, were selling at a very low price because the shipping industry was beginning to drop and because people didn't want old ships, old cruise ships. Because people who go on cruises, you know, not usually East Enders, people who go on cruises, of course not now, but generally, you know, they want really posh accommodation. Posh, by the way, comes from the word pour out, starboard home.

Did you know that? See how much you learn when you go to church? But I looked at some ships and I was just even more amazed. Just as the first vehicles we had in OM were vehicles that went thousands of miles and yet we bought them for three or four hundred pounds and we repaired them ourselves. And I thought, why can't we get our own ship? And it was two years before we even had our first crew member.

In fact, one of the first was Graham Scott. Talked to him on the phone today. Left a big first officer's position with a top shipping company to come when we didn't even have a ship.

And he helped promote this vision, helped us find other members of the crew. And then we came across this ship in Denmark and were able to purchase it seventeen and a half years ago for seventy thousand pounds. And even with that ship now going down the bottom of the ocean and all that we've lost with that, economically the whole project has been a huge success just beyond anything we could ever dream, including everything we've just lost.

Just beyond anything we could have imagined. Because we have hardly been turned away from a port. Sometimes we would sell a hundred thousand pounds or fifty thousand, a hundred thousand would be due loss, fifty thousand pounds in books in a week.

And this is why, unless people understand the ministry of OM, they can't understand how we are rejoicing in the midst of this crisis. It is a crisis because we measure what God has done these seventeen years. So let's open our hearts.

What does He want to say to us? How does He want to prepare us better for 1988? It's hard to believe isn't it? It's 1988. Beatings, imprisonments, riots. Have there been any really big riots lately? Hard work,

sleepless nights, hunger.

I find that this emphasis is left out of a lot of so-called Christian teaching in our day. And it greatly concerns me. Because if we give the idea that as Christians we go around with some kind of magic wand that we can wave together with a few Bible verses, I will tell you we will produce another gospel.

We will produce another gospel. I felt the strongest speaker at Urbana, where I've just come from, this missions conference that's been going on since the forties, was a character named Tony Compolo. And he accused us there in America of actually creating another Jesus.

Some of us have actually been saying that for many years. And I tell you, I can't try to repeat the way he explains it. But there is a danger that we do produce our own nice, middle class, staid, reserved, traditional, don't rock the boat Jesus.

When that's not the Jesus that we find in the Word of God or demonstrated by the New Testament Church. Hardships, beatings, difficulties, distresses. This passage is not saying this is all that we have as Christians.

No! This is just bringing into balance, as the Scriptures do in such a beautiful way, other passages that talk about blessing, talk about joy, talk about gifts, talk about heaven, talk about healing, talk about deliverance. Hallelujah! The Holy Spirit is doing all those things. We all love to have those experiences.

But you see, if we don't have both sides of the coin, if we don't have the whole counsel of God, Paul said, I have not shunned to declare unto you the whole counsel of God. Acts chapter 20, another very powerful chapter, where we see Paul says for the space of three years, night and day, he was weeping. I know some people get a little surprised when they find me weeping.

I weep once in a while. To me, weeping is biblical. Maybe all my weeping may not be biblical, but weeping is biblical.

When did you last weep for lost people, a lost world? If you can't weep here, at least weep there. At least tell the Lord you want to weep. When I get the news about Iran and Iraq or about Sri Lanka or about Kampuchea, I want to weep.

I can't always weep. You know, I'm as human as the next person. And I believe we need the challenge of this great chapter here in the sixth chapter of 2 Corinthians.

It goes on to speak about the reality of the Holy Spirit, purity, patience, kindness. In front of 18,000 people on New Year's Eve when I was given five or six more minutes to speak to this congregation, the Lord just led me to read a powerful quotation from Psalms and Isaiah about repentance and confession. And then confess to that whole congregation that I felt my greatest failure in 1987 was, at times, the way I spoke and treated my own wife.

And ask God to forgive me, I think I already had done that, and to somehow make 88 a better year in my home. Now, I don't know about your home, but my home becomes a little bit of a pressure cooker. And I'm the kind of person who is somewhat living in the fast lane.

Someone accused me of not living in the fast lane, but creating my own lanes. But I know at times when I have been under pressure, and this has gone wrong and that's gone wrong, that I have spoken to my dear

wife in ways that were displeasing to God. Because the Word of God puts a strong emphasis on self-control.

It's a strong emphasis on kindness. And it is always an enigma how sometimes those of us who are so fluent and gifted in the pulpit can behave so unkindly and so ungifted in our own homes. I understand from many Christian leaders that this is somewhat of an epidemic.

It may be linked with the ministry, it may be linked with the fact that as leaders we are being carefully watched. And so we do, we always like to believe it's all victory, but we do repress some of our emotions. There are people probably in the church or our team that we would really like to poke in the nose, but that will not go over very well in front of the rest of the congregation.

So sometimes we bottle it up. We like to believe it's all victory. We get home, we let our hair down, we feel a little more relaxed.

In fact, we are maybe uptight, and then our wife says something that we feel is not on, or she wants to talk about something that we believe is irrelevant. This is one of the problems I have with my dear wife. What she feels is relevant and what I feel irrelevant, some of the little issues of the house, it's like two people from two different planets coming together to go water skiing.

Very difficult. So I thank God for this passage and many other passages of Scripture that put an emphasis on kindness, on self-control, on purity, on godliness. And I pray that if you are committed to this way of living, and I'm sure most of you are, that you will not become impatient with yourself, because that's also wrong.

We don't rob Peter to pay Paul. We don't become impatient with ourselves in order that we may become more patient with someone else. Because I find that sometimes, especially young Christians, become extreme in the whole area of sanctification and spiritual growth, and they think it's all going to happen so quickly, and maybe for a while, for a while, they maintain quite a level of godliness, and really, you know, really feeling encouraged.

Somehow they're carried along on last summer's big camp and great church meetings and lots of fellowship and good books and Bible studies, and they maintain a level for quite a while. Very few people I've interviewed in 30 years keep that level all the time. Something goes wrong, something happens, some of that may have even been repression rather than victory, and such people, when they fail, they don't know how to bounce back.

So what do they do? They turn on themselves. Many decide they're not even going to go to church anymore because they had a great experience in the church, they got a great blessing, and maybe after a while it didn't seem to last, so why go back there? And I just think it's so important as we go forward in our Christian lives to be patient with ourselves. I don't think I would be here today if I hadn't learned that.

I learned it many, many different ways. Even as a young Christian, I was privileged to study under great men of God, to read a wide range of books. I remember picking up Lane Adams' book, *Why Is It Taking So Long to Get Better?* Just the title was a stimulation to me.

A number of areas where I was trying to be more godly, more sanctified, more self-controlled. One of them was my driving. I read Billy Graham's sermon as a young Christian, *Highway Safety, a Spiritual Problem*.

I wanted to be, you know, a spiritual driver, and I repented when I read that little sermon, and I distributed hundreds of copies of it, and I launched a campaign within OM for safe, spirit-controlled driving. We even got an OM driver's license. You couldn't drive unless you had an OM driver's license.

Not enough to have a British license, you have to have a spiritual license, OM driver's license. Quite a few failed the test, got really depressed about it. Here I am, 30 years after that commitment, still finding it very difficult to be the spirit-controlled driver.

I find it so easy to get irritated in driving. Maybe you don't have this problem, people cut you off, hit you back, park in the wrong place, do these things wrong, you probably just rolled your window down, praise the Lord, God bless you today. Maybe you could write me a few little notelets on how you do that.

To me it's a beautiful illustration, because most of us would accept the fact that to be a totally spirit-controlled, safe, rejoicing, happy driver basically is a long-term program, right? Most all of you would agree with that. You're not going to come forward after the meeting and ask for deliverance over poor driving. I mean, if you do, praise the Lord, probably Charles, who used to be a pilot, can pray for you on that.

Most pilots, by the way, are very dangerous drivers. I'm sure that's not true of you. That's right.

But the same is true in many other areas of our life. It's going to take time. That area in your marriage you're working on, that difficulty you're facing in your office, where you want to be the Christ-like example.

You want to be the testimony like all the messages say, right? So that everybody in the office is going to see Jesus in you, and they're all going to come running to you and ask and say, how do you do it? How do you maintain the glow? And there you are. You give them a little track, and they kneel down during the morning tea break, and they accept Jesus as their Savior, and you live happily ever after. But for most of us, it doesn't work that way.

Some of us, we find out when we're witnessing, we're actually turning people off. And then when we try to tell some other maybe Christian counselor about it, instead of getting encouragement, he puts us in a double guilt trip. A lot of God's people are going around today living in perpetual guilt, because they're not witnessing good enough, they're not a good enough husband, or a good enough wife, or a good enough father.

I mean, a good enough father, I mean, that's really something, right? And I find people are depressed because one of their children has gone astray. Most of the men of God I've read about in all history had at least one of their children gone astray. Would you like to hear about Tozer's children? Want to get depressed? What about Moody's children or Finney's children? What about Charles Marsh just wrote to me, this godly man who worked in the Muslim world.

His son is completely, completely gone as far as anyone could ever be. And he's writing up his biography. He wrote to me and he said, should I include this in my biography? And I'm going to write him back.

I said, you jolly well should, because we got enough phony biographies, and we need to understand that as Christians we are human, and we are in a warfare, and there are heartaches, and things go wrong, and sometimes we're responsible, oftentimes we're not responsible, other times it's mutual cooperation. And I believe we can learn from the logos going down because that's the way life is. Billy Graham, my spiritual father, wow, I finally met him.

After 33 years, I've dreamt about this, I've had, you know, nightmares and dreams, when I would meet Billy Graham, my spiritual father. And we were ministering together at this conference, and on the first night when he was speaking, I was in the prayer room, and he came in and, you know, I had three minutes, one minute for each decade since I've been a believer. Well, praise the Lord.

And he told us as he was going up to preach, I go up tonight in fear and trembling. Actually, he was suffering from phlebitis in his leg, and had to go the next morning off to the Mayo Clinic. The newspapers, by the way, in the United States says, Billy Graham, ready for heaven, unwilling to retire.

69 years of age, Billy Graham, and I think he's praying and thinking toward at least another decade of evangelism in the work of God. It's exciting to be a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ. We do see answers to prayer.

We see souls saved. We see blessings. I can tell you about thousands of answers to prayer with the MV Lagos.

I'm not demotivated in my praying through this accident at sea. I am encouraged and challenged to pray more, understanding that prayer is God's weapon for accomplishing his work. There are many other things I would like to say about this passage.

It's so powerful, but I'd like to just focus on those words where it says in verse 10, sorrowful yet always rejoicing. It goes on to say, poor yet making many rich. That's an interesting little statement, isn't it? Having nothing and yet possessing everything.

I think of some of the people who have come off the ship, especially some of the families, and some of them probably have nothing left. They lived on that ship for years. They have their possessions on that ship.

Some of them may have nothing left. And isn't it interesting that this scripture says, having nothing yet possessing everything. God's great concern in scripture, as I'm sure you understand, is what we possess spiritually.

I hope you never feel bitter because you don't have as much money as the man down the road. We have a lot of this in the States. People just getting downright depressed.

I just counseled someone absolutely depressed because in his particular job he can only get this much salary though he's pushing toward 50 years of age. But these young people are coming in with the right career, especially accounting, something along that line. And at 25 years of age, they're already getting more salary than this man, even though they may have similar, almost equal education.

And we think of how much of this is in the press these days. Everybody seems to feel that their group is getting the wrong end of the stick. Is that an American or a British expression? Both.

Everyone feels they're not getting a fair deal. But I just believe it's so important to realize that what we possess spiritually is just so much more important. God uses different people in different ways.

God commits different amounts of this world's goods to different people in different ways. And that's something we need to remember. But let us just focus on those words, sorrowful yet always rejoicing, because this will really help me share something that I found just true of my own life.

I think sometimes if people listen to me, at least certain messages, they might think I was this person of perpetual energy and perpetual joy, rejoicing in all situations, praising the Lord no matter what happens. But in fact, I am a man of many sorrows. In fact, God prepared me for this sorrow.

It is sorrowful. Some of us spend a lot of our time just trying to save one more pound. OM is a very frugal organization.

We're always trying to save a pound, even less than a pound. And then all of a sudden, hundreds of thousands, hundreds of thousands, counting the books, gone. It makes everything seem so bizarre.

I get sort of in the middle of the day, but a wave goes across me of depression. What's the use? And I think it's just so important to realize as Christians there is a place for sorrow. I already quoted Billy Graham who said, every life at its best is filled with sorrow.

Maybe you've lost a loved one. You've grieved your sorrow. There's a place for that.

Remember that little girl in Texas? It just seems a few weeks ago, about the same time as that horrendous Hungerford crisis. I can't get that out of my mind. I drove by there on that very day.

There was a girl in Texas and they went down this well. The amount of money and effort and manpower, one life, what would you say is more valuable? To have lost one life on the ship or to have lost the ship? How would you like to write a story on that? How much value to put on life? We've had two men just killed in Bangladesh. It won't make any newspapers.

Nobody even asks. Two men standing by the side of the road just visited someone in the hospital. Two of our full-time Bengalis, Bengali workers, a log truck coming down the hill.

It was a very strange place for a bus stand, but that's the way it is in some places. And this log truck came down the hill, went out of control, plowed into the bus stand, and those two men were in eternity. Praise God, both of them know the Lord Jesus.

We had to deal with a Hindu family. We had to deal with one Christian family. The driver, of course, just jumped out of the truck and true fashion ran away.

If we do get a settlement for their lives from the insurance company of the truck, we will get 500 pounds sterling, total value of one Bengali. How do you face this kind of thing in life? One person seems to be worth so much, and another person, well, when I lived in Nepal, it was cheaper to pay off anybody you killed than buy car insurance. Life was so cheap in Nepal back in those days.

In fact, in some areas it would be far more difficult if you hit a cow and killed a cow than if you hit a person, especially a woman. We live in an unusual world, and I believe we have to know how to weep, because in some of these situations, many of the things that face us, sorrow comes to our heart. And in a sense, God prepared me for this incident, this awesome crisis that we're in right now, because over these years, there have been many sorrows.

The sorrow of seeing someone get away from the Lord. A man, a friend of mine, one of our early directors, got away from the Lord. Soon he was an alcoholic.

He was destroying his life, destroying his family, destroying his lovely children. He told me just a few days ago he sat on a park bench and was going to take his own life. I've been sorrowing over that man for

years.

I have his picture. I know him very closely. But I haven't given up praying.

And he flew from his hometown to the Urbana Convention, where I was, among other things, to share with me that God has broken through. He had enough courage to put himself into a detox center, detoxification center. They specialize in this kind of alcohol addiction.

And somehow there, he met God again. And he's been off the bottle, we say, for many, many months, back with his dear wife, who suffered with him in ways that you could not, not fathom. Yes, there is a place for sorrow.

And all of us could tell of sorrowing situations we've gone through. One of the things that grieves me the most, that hardly I get through a day, is often the state of the church and the state of God's people. Don't think, because I'm in Operation Mobilization, you know, I'm off here, you know, giving out tracts in a tree.

My whole work is completely involved with the church. Local churches. Over one thousand are in partnership with NOM.

We have pastor's conferences. We're involved in in-depth counseling with pastors, Christian leaders, thousands and thousands of them all over the world. And often people like ourselves, who come in maybe for a month from outside, they will unload their burdens.

They will open their hearts. Often even phone us long distance. The church is under attack.

Local churches are under attack. Ten, fifteen years ago, when new churches were being born, many people in Britain rushed into these new churches, tired of their old congregations, tired of some of the traditions, tired of some of the things they thought. They ran in, just as we went into the ship ministry.

A little bit naive. And now we're finding even many of the new churches are going through splits that are more difficult than the old churches went through fifteen years ago. There are many of us that could set up full-time clinics in Great Britain just for hurting people.

And I tell you, some of these hurts that people get in the churches when things go out of control are awesome. There are people having mental and nervous breakdowns because as God's people so easily we drift, so easily we get into extremes, so easily we get selfish, so easily we see only our viewpoint. So slow we are at times to draw upon the deeper resources of God that can enable us to love someone who is hurting us.

That can enable us to put on not just a gospel band-aid, but a deep, deep covering of God's therapy and God's acceptance so that we can get through rejection, we can pass through difficulties, be it in our church or anywhere else. The church is not some special fraternity for super saints and the totally spiritual people of this world. The church is still in some ways a clinic for sinners.

Don't be surprised if you don't get hurt in church life. Be absolutely amazed if you don't because we are still people. We are still human.

The greatest men of God written up 15 years ago have had some of the greatest heartbreaks and have disappointed the greatest numbers of people because as human beings we do tend to look to man. We do tend to put our confidence in man. We do lift up our leaders and talk about our leaders and tell of the

wonderful things they do or don't do.

And then when they sin or they fail or something else goes wrong or we even hear something, that's the thing that grieves me is people operating just on the basis of something they've heard. I praise the Lord for people that have had courage enough when they heard something a bit wild about George Brewer to call me up. Blessed be such people.

I have three phones now just to handle the conversations. One even travels with me. But I can tell you the people who actually call up when they have something against you and open their heart in fact are very few.

It's just so much easier just to talk to someone else even though we may discover to our own heartbreak time afterward, sometime afterward that in fact what we've said is not true. Then the devil tries another tactic. Tries to get us discouraged.

Tries to get us so we don't forgive ourselves. Tries to get us to take the blame. I am convinced there are people here tonight you are taking blame for things in your life that you should not be taking blame for.

It's not as simple as the devil is trying to get you to believe. There are many factors that brought this situation or that situation into being or broke that relationship or caused this particular difficulty. Life is not as simple as the devil sometimes would like us to believe when he's trying to really run us into the ground and trying to get us to believe we're to blame.

Our captain, from what I heard, trying to take the blame. Technically, with a ship, legally and in court, there are things, of course, that have to technically pin the blame on someone with no loss of life. This is relatively simple for a Christian organization like us.

When I called the captain, I said, I'm not even interested in talking about the accident right now. I just want to tell you we're standing with you. I said on the phone from here to Chile, we believe it's an act of God.

We need to be bigger hearted in all that we do and all that we think and all that we say. We need to be more open minded in trying to understand what life is all about, what's happening in the church, what's happening in our mission societies, what's happening in our homes, what's happening in our offices, what's happening in our families. Yes, there is a place for sorrow.

Don't be afraid of a little weeping in 1988. One of our godly men in this country had an accident in which one or two people were killed with a car. And I know that man of God went through great trial and stress for a long time.

What if that happened to you tonight? None of us want that. None of us want to drive out here in these automobiles, all of which are potential weapons, and kill anybody. Yet it happens.

I pray that somehow whatever may come into your life in 1988, that you will have greater grace to handle it, greater grace to see that God can overrule, greater grace to see that probably the reason for it isn't maybe exactly what you think. There was a man in a mission field, I think Indonesia, who was working on a small plane and I'll never forget reading the story. And while he was working on the small plane, he was called away to the telephone.

He went back and he completed his work, at least he thought he had. That man, that missionary mechanic, saw that plane explode in front of his very eyes and all the passengers killed in the plane. And as he saw it, he realized he had failed to tighten the bolt on the fuel line.

Now that I call a big, very, very big personal crisis. And yet God, through the agony and the regret and the suffering, gave that man the grace to somehow work his way through this, face the loved ones and press on as a soldier of Jesus Christ and eventually even write an article about it with his own name in the article. We are God's people not because we can do a miracle a minute, not because we're some kind of superman or superwoman.

I think she was on last night. None of you, of course, watch such things. You just recorded it for your grandchildren.

But we are God's people who have in Jesus Christ and by the power of the Holy Spirit, the stickability, the stamina, the resilience, the gifts of the Spirit, the grace of the Spirit to press through when God chooses not to deliver. I tell you, when they had the alarm on that ship, around midnight, they gathered for hours and hours of prayer and they were praying, Lord, deliver us, deliver the ship. They got half.

They got half of their answers. They were all delivered. But the Lord let the ship go.

I don't understand it all. But I know that's what life is made of. There's the good and there's the bad.

There are the times of blessing and breakthrough and joy and there are the times of weeping and heartache and sometimes dryness and even depression. We have to be those who can rejoice and who can praise and who can believe and do and accomplish great things. But we also must be those people who can fight, who can stand firm when everything seems to be going out of control, who can love when it seems there is no more ability to love and who can go one more mile when it seems there is even no more road to walk on.

We are God's praising people. Amen! But we are also God's fighting people and I will tell you, it will take more than an old ship on the bottom of the ocean in South America to stop any mighty movement raised up by the Holy Ghost. And I pray you'll be in that movement and you'll be among those kind of people, sorrowful.

Yes, I've wept many times in the past few days, yet always, always rejoicing. Let us pray. Our God and Father, You've brought our paths to cross at this particular moment in history to drive these great truths of Your Scripture, of Your Word, deep into our hearts.

That we may develop greater fight and greater stamina to be Your men, to be Your women. A people of praise, a people of power, but also a people of fight, a people of stickability, a people of spiritual integrity and balance. We may know what it is to love the unlovely.

We will know what it is to go the extra mile when it seems that each step will have an element of pain or hurt. We may have a balance of truth and let one great Scripture bring other great Scriptures into the right focus in our life for the moment of history in which we are living at that time. Lord, keep us from judgmentalism as different Christians are led different ways on different issues.

We may major on the majors and sometimes agree to disagree on the minors and on the minor issues. We thank You, Lord, for Your mercy. We thank You for Your deliverance of all the people of the Envy

Lagos.

And we thank You. We thank You for the sinking of the ship, though it be with sorrow, though it be with questions, though it be with an ache in our heart. And we believe that from the death of this ship will be resurrected something far greater, maybe another ship, far more important than another ship, more people, more people who will allow the Lagos, the Word, to indwell their hearts and dominate their lives and to take the Gospel, yea, Lord, even from Latin America to the ends of the earth.

For we pray this in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

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