

# Your Big Test

by George Verwer

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*George Verwer's sermon emphasizes the necessity of trials and testing in the Christian faith as a means to spiritual maturity and preparation for greater challenges ahead.*

**Duration:** 52:06

**Scripture:** James 1:2

**Topics:** "Testing"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of receiving and understanding the word of God. They mention their extensive experience in preaching and the need to approach scripture with seriousness and openness. The speaker highlights the call for holiness in 1 Peter 1:13-15 and encourages believers to see beyond difficult circumstances, trusting in God's purpose. They also reference James 1:2-8, which teaches that trials can lead to maturity and the importance of seeking wisdom from God in faith.

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## Transcript

But I want to read two passages of scripture. The first one is in the first epistle of Peter. Remember, this is the word of God.

Verse three. 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, reserved in heaven for you, 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.

This is a key verse. Though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold trials, that the trial of your faith, the testing and the trial of your faith, really being much more precious than gold, that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ, who having not seen ye love, in whom though now ye see him not yet, the meeting ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls. Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you, searching what manner of time the Spirit of Christ who was in them did signify when he testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow.

Verse 13 speaks about girding up the loins of your mind, being sober, hoping to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. And then gives that great plea for holiness in verse 15. As he who hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of life.

Then to the book of James. Book of James, going to go back a little bit. Chapter 1. Here again, please, the word of the Lord.

James, a servant of God. Chapter 1 of the Lord Jesus Christ to the 12 tribes which are scattered abroad. Greetings, my brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing this, that the testing of your faith worketh patience.

But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect or mature and entire, lacking nothing. Many of you lack wisdom. Let a mask of God who giveth all men liberally and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him.

Let him ask in faith, not wavering. For he that wavereth is like the wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed. But let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord.

A double-minded man is unstable in all of his ways. Let the brother of low decree rejoice in that he is exalted, but the rich in that he is made low because of the flower of the grass, he shall pass away. For the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat, but it wither withereth the grass, his flower falleth, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth.

So also shall the rich man fade away in his ways. Blessed is the man that endureth temptations, for when he has tried, he shall receive the crown of life which the Lord had promised to him that love him. Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God.

For God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man. But every man is tempted when he has drawn away of his own lust and enticed, and when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin. And sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.

Do not err, my beloved brethren. Let's just pray again. God, this is your word.

We cannot take these things lightly. We must receive what you have for us. Reveal deeper meanings to these scriptures.

Open our own hearts to take steps of faith that we may in fact do what we have just sung about and present ourselves in a way that we are wholly available. In Jesus' name, amen. There's a message I've been sharing all over the world for many years.

I used to perhaps preach a little too much. I was sometimes going 800, 900 messages a year, especially when we lived on the ship. You could really get a lot of messages, fill the auditorium, send them out, fill it again.

And now I guess I only take about 400 messages. So maybe it's 400 or 500 messages since I was last with you. Please forgive me if I've forgotten some of your names or get confused in some other area.

I know your church has been through a difficult time, and I've been praying, and I believe that disappointment can be God's appointment. We must understand that. Romans 8.28 is in the heart of the New Testament, and that's something we also need to realize.

I felt a burden to speak from some notes that are in the back of my Bible, and I've been there for many years. So this isn't some message I have because your church has gone through a special time of crisis and got a little bit of publicity or whatever else. But this is a message I've shared all over the world with God's people and firstly with my own OM, Operation Mobilization leaders, because I have this deep conviction that as God's people we will be tested.

We will be tested. I'm in a time of testing. I remember in Kathmandu, Nepal, when I lived in Asia, I lived in India for a while, and then I moved to Nepal.

And I'd bring up young men, Indian men, and give them a leadership training course and send them back into India. What a joy to see some of them now, 20 years later, we're celebrating the 25th anniversary of our work in India. We have 300 full-time people in that work.

Elizabeth Clark from your own fellowship worked with us there for a while. Now they're mainly Indians. But I remember a message, I'm not sure if I ever repeated it, but I gave it in Kathmandu, somewhere that's probably on tape, called the Big Test.

I believe many of the problems we have today among our Christian leaders around the world is because when they were young, they did not lay proper foundations in their lives, in the area of discipline, in the area of the crucified life, in the area of openness and honesty. The acorns of the teenage years become the oak trees of the 40s. And this message I shared in Kathmandu was called the Big Test.

And I said, I believe every one of you young men eventually are going to have a major test. I mean a major test which can be linked with a temptation. God allows a temptation which in turn becomes a test of our faith, of our love, of what we're really made of.

And I pointed out something, and I know I need to think this through more thoroughly once again now, so many years have passed, that many of the little struggles we have are to prepare us for that big test that's down the road. So don't despise some of those little problems that are coming into your life. Don't think, well, you know, I just had a problem with a puncture in my car this week, an irrelevant thing to happen, just a waste of time.

No, God can use that. You just lost a job, that's a fairly big test actually. To lose a job, a lot of disappointment in the job market today.

We must, as God's people, see beyond the hand that may be grabbing our arm, the hand of circumstance, we must see beyond that to what is God doing through these situations. I remember as a young Christian, I didn't know really quite how to behave with women, I was just a baby Christian, and I took my girlfriend off in the woods in my car and I started to neck, that's an American term, I forget what you say over here, but you're well tuned in with all your American television stories, Dallas and all the rest. And I maybe began to go a little further than just some kissing, just a young man, and I was wondering what the Bible taught about that, I'd just become a Christian, I was just beginning to move a little beyond the kissing stage, nothing in terms of immorality, because I knew and felt that was truly clearly wrong from the Bible, but all those things that the Bible doesn't talk about.

And lo and behold, a policeman pulled up behind my car. You're not allowed to park in the woods in this part of the country, especially with your arms around a girl. And the policeman banged on the window and frightened me right out of the seat of the car.

And he said, you know, you'd better get out of here real quick before I do something. I was so petrified, I put the vehicle in the wrong gear. Instead of going forward, I went backward into a large ditch.

This was an old Henry J, a manufactured in the British Isles, and I couldn't get it out. The father of this young woman was an alcoholic. I don't think he liked me.

And easily, as a man who'd been through divorce a couple of times, he didn't always believe the best. And I was nervous because I had to get her home by 12 o'clock. We ran down the road and we got to a house and got on the phone and phoned her father.

She was a ripe old age of about 18. We called the father. I said, look, I've had some difficulty with my car.

Could you pick us up out on a certain road and, you know, take your daughter home and I can take care of my car? He came and he wanted to see the car. I said, I can help. No, no, you just take her home.

I'll take care of the car. No. And he insisted on going to where the car was.

You can imagine his thoughts and his lovely little daughter was back in the woods in a car that was in a ditch. That was the end of that relationship with that girl. It went on for a few more weeks.

He accused me very heavily. And this little baby Christian, somehow in God's providence, went off to a church retreat in the woods of New Jersey and sought God. What was I to learn from that little bit of folly with the police and with the father? And in those very early days of my Christian life, I realized that if I didn't go through radical, radical surgery of my whole being by the power of God and the word of God, that I would never make it in my Christian life.

Too many problems. Big mouth, big eyes, high energy. I wouldn't make it.

That's when I began to devour books. That's when I began to practice what the Apostle Paul says, which is so seldom practiced today. It's hardly even mentioned in our Bible colleges, in our seminaries.

Apostle Paul, first Corinthians chapter nine, he said, I buffet my body. Ooh, that sounds like asceticism. Anything the church is against today is asceticism.

We want to enjoy the comforts of being good, little prosperous evangelicals. We have a movement out of the United States that actually teaches all spiritual people will prosper financially. We know God does prosper individuals.

That's no problem. But to say spirituality and prosperity always come together is a little embarrassing if you've worked as I have in the church in India and Pakistan and Bangladesh and many parts of the world where deeply spiritual people who often know more about Jesus Christ than most of us live very close to the poverty line. Let us beware of just judging our Christianity by our own culture.

Apostle Paul said, I buffet my body. I bring it into subjection. Lest after preaching to others, I become a castaway.

God, by his grace, has kept this lustful, loud mouth these 30 some years. And in every one of these days of these 30 some years, I've experienced that personal revival that I want you to read about in this amazing little book. And I say this, especially to you young people.

Because today what's going on in many places, what is going on in many places in the area of impurity among God's people, there is no excuse whatsoever. There is provision in Jesus Christ to live in purity and reality and honesty. And if a like me can learn it at 18 and prove it until he's 51, then there is scope for everyone and excuse for no one.

Now at the same time, Satan is subtle as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. And Satan is attempting to destroy churches with powerful testimonies like this church. Satan is attempting to destroy missionaries as we're seeing an increase of impurity and immorality on the mission field.

And I believe we need to understand that every little test in our life, it may be in the area of food, it may be in the area of our job, it may be in the area of our emotions, it may be a broken romance, it may be some other kind of problem, it may be small, but you need to take advantage of those small tests to lay the foundation for the big one. Because it's coming down the road at you. It's coming down the road.

Not just a few people are going to be tested to the core of their Christian faith, I would say a majority of Christians who love Christ and who want to serve him will be tested. One of our men in India with the very best testimony is being tested right now to the very root as his older son has somehow made a gigantic mess and it's causing chaos and it's being talked about. And it's a test, I just talked to him on the phone again, that is beyond anything he ever thought would happen.

Brothers and sisters, anything can happen to us as God's people. Anything can happen. And to say that God would never allow that to happen in my life, God would never allow one of my children to go to prison, a friend of mine who's a pastor has just had his son put in prison.

To say this can never happen in my home, this can never happen in my job, this can never happen, is just being naive about what life is all about. Anything can happen among God's people. Now what we do when it happens, that's more in our hand.

I've listed in the back of my Bible seven ways that our maturity in Christ will be tested. As I said, I wrote this in a long time ago and I've shared it all over the world when I've had opportunity. How will our maturity in Christ be tested? Many people think that Operation Immobilization is mainly some kind of massive evangelistic program.

If you'd like the inside information on OM, let me just tell you that our first burden from the beginning of our work is spiritual reality. It is revival, personal revival like that book. You look at the leaflet, the seven major emphasis of OM, and you'll discover what we're really trying to say to God's people.

My address is on the back of that, by the way, if you want to write and lodge a complaint. There's actually 14 emphasis in this leaflet and we need every one of those in our life. Satan looks for one weak place in your armor and he'll go for that place.

That's why we must declare the whole counsel of God. That's why I've gone all over the world urging every pastor, every church to make sure at least once or twice a year you speak from the Bible what the Bible says about sex. Because there's over 500 verses in the Bible on the subject of sex.

Billy Graham is one of the few who speaks openly and honestly about sex. And what a testimony this man has maintained. He would never for years even be found with another single woman.

People mocked at Billy Graham. In OM we took on a similar practice to avoid the appearance of evil because we don't trust the devil and we don't trust people's tongues. People laughed at this OM policy, but some of the most lewd magazines in America have tried to push Billy Graham into the arms of some promiscuous woman and just get one picture.

That's all they need and that would be front page right across America. They've tried to nail Billy Graham again last year and they couldn't find anything significant to write any scandal about. I am so grateful that my own spiritual father, Billy Graham, has been an example to me.

Yes, our first burden in operation mobilization, and I'm sure it's true in your church, is spiritual reality. It's holiness. It's not the size of what we're doing.

It's not that we have a big church and a new church. It's not that OM now has a new ship. We can match you.

You got a new church, we got a new ship. Big deal. This must really impress God as he looks down and sees that we have built a church and sees that we have built a ship.

No, God looks right through the wood or right through the steel and he looks at your heart and my heart and the Bible says the heart is deceitful and desperately wicked. And I will tell you when the Holy Ghost comes in power on a congregation, the week after the elders will be packed with people seeking counseling, confessing and putting things right. Praise God for this issue of Christianity Today, the best Christian magazine I know.

Reading it just as I came off the train, the entire issue is given to the problem of homosexuality, which at present is an epidemic among God's people. And few people say anything about it. And this beautiful issue shows that there is hope for the homosexual and they can come into victory and reality and enjoy marriage or be called to singleness depending on how God works in their lives.

So our burden, and I'm sure it's your burden, and it would be my desire that we could recommit ourselves to this tonight, is reality. It's purity. It's honesty.

Reality first, geography second, I often say. Our first burden isn't to get thousands of people to come on Love Europe. In fact, if you understand OM, one of the main reasons we try to get all these people on Love Europe is simply to be able to give them this message.

Half the people at Love Europe stood up to recommit their lives to Jesus Christ. Over 500 people were personally counseled, many of them about deep sexual problems, some of them seemingly into even difficulties with evil spirits. And many found a new life, though we know that's an ongoing process.

One of these seven areas where we're going to be tested. The first area I've listed in my Bible, you can write this down. This isn't copyright.

You can write this down and preach it. Go out on the street corner. I don't know if you do any open air ministry, but we saw a lot of it very fruitful this summer.

The first test that many of us are going to have is the test of misunderstandings. Do you ever have any misunderstandings in your family? I've reared three children. They're all grown up.

I saw my daughter yesterday as a bridesmaid in one of my best friend's daughter's wedding. I can't hardly believe it. She was born in Leigh, Lancashire.

Dr. Hunter, now with the Lord, his wife is here this evening. It's so good to see you. And she's 25.

Life goes by very, very quickly. But I can tell you in rearing my children in our home, we have had misunderstandings. Sometimes I was trying to say something, and people were hearing something else.

Yesterday, I had four misunderstandings with my wife in one day. Because we had two weddings, we live a little bit of an active life. Little things like, you go over here and meet me.

And she hears one thing and I do something else. And so she's sitting there waiting and waiting in the rain after the wedding, and I'm not showing up. I'm in the car working on my letters, which I have a bit of a neurosis about, thinking she is going to meet me in the car.

Suddenly, it dawns on me, she's waiting for me. I jump in the car and find her on the corner. And though my wife is a relatively patient woman, sometimes, you know, just a little bit of a struggle.

I did a similar thing after the second wedding. She thought she was going to drive me to the station. I decided to go walk to the station on my own.

The wedding was very long. I was late for my evening meeting. So she came out looking for me to drive me to the station, and I was gone.

Where's my husband? Has anybody... You always look really interesting when you're asking people if they know where your husband is. In our churches, in our OM teams, at the Quinta, at Brussels, in Bombay, the major problems we often have, the major tests are linked with misunderstandings. In fact, often when we have one crisis, we get that crisis resolved, but at the same time, other misunderstandings come.

And we see, in the way the devil works, that the biggest problem wasn't the initial problem. The biggest problem becomes the misunderstandings that come afterward, and then sometimes the gossip or the confusion, because when we're trying to evangelize the whole world, there never seems to be enough time to get all the misunderstandings sorted out. How many of you pray for Operation Mobilization? Could I take my survey? You actually pray for us once a week, once a month.

Could you raise your hand? Okay, we've got a few. Either the rest of you are new, or last time I was here, I made zero impact, or you're praying for too many people. That's probably a misunderstanding.

Would you pray for us right now? Because I'll tell you the truth, in OM, we have got a lot of problems. We've got a lot of misunderstandings. Every month, we have 10% less than the amount of money we need to function.

That alone creates tension in our central accounting office, in our financial control office, as people phone in from all over the world. Is there any money? We need extra money. This lady's having her baby.

Her prayer partners have given her some money for this baby. Why can't we get the money? The money's stuck in some bank on the other end of the world. The Brazilians who came on Love Europe could not get their money out of the country.

If we take it out, it's worth half of what it actually is. That is difficult. We have got misunderstandings, and one of the reasons we are rejoicing, we're pressing on, we're not going to let this hinder us, though it will in some ways.

We know that misunderstandings are part of life, and God can use them. God can use them. So often my failure to communicate properly to my own wife has humbled me, has caused me to repent, and that has enabled me, I'm not defending any of that, I repented of it, but that has enabled me to be more patient with other people, and that's one of the great needs in my life.

Because as far as I'm concerned, in my humanity, most people are going too slow. Most churches are going too slow. I find the whole Christian scene really quite unbearable at times, but when I repent of my own sin, I see my own weakness, then I am less judgmental toward others.

So God has actually used my failures, not defending them, to teach me Christ-likeness in other ways, and in the end of the day, the devil is the loser. So I thank God for misunderstandings. If I caused them, if I've sinned, I repent of that, but I thank God that he can overrule misunderstandings.

We have a few hundred in OM right now, considering the number of people, considering our involvement in a hundred nations, that's not really many. Would you like to see our fax bill or telephone bill? You would really be surprised. But you see, God has given us a thousand, eight hundred people who are in the midst of one of the greatest spiritual invasions the world has ever seen, working with churches and working with other agencies.

There are misunderstandings recorded again and again in the Bible, even in the life of Jesus Christ, for he was misunderstood. Do you ever feel misunderstood by your church? By the leaders? By your wife? By your children? Will you learn how to receive that? Don't let it cause you to panic or do something foolish or overreact. I'm an overreactor, nothing to do with atomic energy, especially in committee meeting.

I'm a poor committee man, very emotional. The board member on the other side of the room says something that I totally disagree with. I'm in high gear.

I'm moving straight at it. Praise the Lord, I don't do it so much anymore. But when I do it, people get hurt.

You know Peter Maiden? How many know Peter Maiden? He's my associate international director. And when it comes to situations where it looks like I could easily lose my cool and say something hurtful, I say, here I am, Lord, send Peter. A phlegmatic, semi-unemotional Cumbrian, never seen him hardly ever lose his cool in a board meeting.

When I'm steaming, you can see the smoke out my ears. This is why I so believe in teamwork. Misunderstandings are so easy.

And if you're emotional as I am, if you're a reactor, you feel things deeply, you're a preacher. Preachers are always dangerous in board meetings because here I've got 45 minutes. I can just speak.

You just sit. You're a captive audience. We've locked the doors, by the way.

I can just pour it all out. It's great. Some of you don't look so great, but I feel great.

But board meetings, committee meetings, rearing children, households, problem solving, which at times I've been weak, totally different. You've got to listen. You've got to be quiet.

Let the other people speak. Misunderstandings can be one of God's great platforms for learning holiness and reality, learning teamwork. Stop trying to do it all yourself.

And it's exciting. Don't be resentful because you've been misunderstood. We all have had similar experiences.

Don't let even a root of bitterness come in. We're warned about that in the book of Hebrews. The second way our maturity is going to be tested, I'm going to have to speed up a little bit, is criticism.

Now these two are very similar. Every man and woman of God that has ever lived, has ever done anything, has been criticized. I want to ask you, and I know this message isn't exactly for babes in Christ, but you can glean something from it.

I don't know if any of you are babes in Christ, but if you do anything for God, you will be criticized. And sometimes, this is the hard part, it's your own fault. It's your own fault.

I thank God for my critics. Right back to my Bible college days as a student. A man came to me when I was being recognized as a great student leader.

He took me into a room aside and he said, you know, I find you a very unfriendly person. I thought I was friendly. Apparently, I was not saying hello to him.

My type of temperament, pragmatic, get the job done. We easily communicate lack of friendliness. Instead of defending myself, somehow, because I had read Calvary Road or something similar, I said, you know, I think you're right, and I broke, and I said, pray for me.

Years later, I met him. He never forgot that experience. He's a close friend, a supporter.

We had lunch together a few years ago when he flew over from the States, runs a Christian radio station, and you can be sure he's pushing Operation Mobilization. You will learn more from your critics than you will from friends. We all need someone who we're able to walk in the light with.

One of the reasons I'm still in the ring is I've never kept anything in. It doesn't mean I have to share it everywhere, but I have people that I can really walk in the light with. My struggle in this area, my struggle in that area.

How are you doing in handling criticism? Maybe on the job, in your work, maybe in the church, maybe in the home. How is it, fathers, when your daughter has roast father for lunch? You're not there, but just happen to hear a little bit of it in the other room. Children have been able to divide mother and father right into two teams, as we sometimes as parents think differently about discipline and about what children should do or not do and where they should go and not go.

Criticism is a way we are all going to be tested. The third way we're going to be tested is something a little unusual, so I have it listed here. It's the test of suddenly having extra money.

Now this is a test that no one will probably even notice because it's a private affair, but many people, when they have fallen into sin, you discover that money was involved. I once had a young man who had terrific problems with impurity and immorality and he went through a great long period of victory and he said, you know, I have to be honest, the reason I got the victory is I didn't have any money. In OM, you give us so little money, I couldn't go out and do what I wanted to do.

That's a bad testimony, isn't it? But it is amazing how dangerous excessive money can be. If you've seen some of the big wipeouts in America among some of these famous people like this one great TV star, you will notice that money and immorality go hand in hand. That's why I believe the call to a more sacrificial lifestyle, the call to live a little closer to the line with our money invested for the kingdom, is a safer way to go, though nothing is any total answer to enemy's subtle attacks outside the armor of God and the reality of Jesus Christ.

Maybe you don't have much money, maybe you're hoping someday that you're going to inherit your aunt's fortune when she goes. We don't like to think like that, do we? But some people do. If ever sudden money comes into your life, beware, take heed.

Be sure you put it all in the hands of God and then say, Lord, now how am I supposed to use this for your glory? We are so weak, we are so vulnerable, so easily when a lot of money comes in our hands, even whole churches have gone through this kind of thing, the enemy gets in. I think of that word that's found in 1 Timothy. I have a lot of verses written here.

I can't read the verses in my notes anymore without putting my glasses on. But look at 1 Timothy 6.10 just very quickly. There are a lot of other verses that I really wanted to look at.

For the love of money is the root of all evil, which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. There's not many verses as strong as that. The temptation that comes, the testing that comes.

Praise God for people that have passed the test. I was reading about an American character. I'd like to meet him.

God has blessed his business. He's in stocks and investments. He and his wife started off with a few thousands and then they had a few hundreds of thousands and now they probably have maybe 200, I mean several millions of investments.

I don't even understand all of this. And they're still living quite carefully and giving it all to God. And they're still in the race of holiness and reality.

It is quite amazing, brothers and sisters, the money that is being released for the work of God from men and women who know how to handle this big test that can come. I have written behind it, right next to it, the fourth area. Success.

Success can be the great test of maturity. Take heed, lest ye fall. Buffet your body, bring it into subjection.

First Corinthians nine. Lest after preaching to others, you become a castaway. Praise God, sometimes for failure.

At least we come out of it with a little humility, and that's worth more than gold. What is humility going for on the stock exchange down in Manchester? What's humility going for? It's an expensive commodity. There is not enough of it.

The lack of it breaks families, breaks churches, breaks evangelistic teams, and breaks people's hearts. One of my favorite books is Andrew Murray's brilliant book. The title is Humility.

No, I've had some failures in my life. I thank God that through those failures, I've learned humility. The pain of the failure, which none of us want, can bring big dividends as we stand on Romans 8.28, as we develop maturity.

We learn to think in a godly way. We learn to get the right balance of scripture. These things cannot hinder us in our walk with God.

Beware of success. It comes often as a back door to failure. The fifth way that will be tested might surprise you.

No, I guess not. It's failure. That's right.

Just as great success can test you, and you can fail that test, so also great failure. Because through that failure, discouragement comes in. Disappointment comes in.

Not easy to have your church written about in the local paper, is it? How are you handling that? I hope you're not just keeping it all in. Pretend nothing's ever happened here. Just smile and go on as usual.

That's what we Christians do. That's why we blow our marriages apart. That's why we blow our friendships apart.

You've gone through a trial. You've gone through a time of testing. From my feeble understanding, you are doing relatively well.

Because I've seen things hit churches. I've been in this ministry for 37 years, and the church completely came unglued. And at the end of the day, there were hundreds, hundreds of people hurt, some of whom totally abandoned the Christian faith altogether.

Because Satan doesn't go for small stakes. Satan doesn't go for one or two people, or one or two ministers. And we've seen, and the story of it is written in this book, how God can restore ministers, and God can restore preachers.

And I've been saying for over two years that this is the most significant book of this decade. The man who wrote this book was just the main speaker at the OM conference just a few weeks ago. Well, Satan's not after one or two.

Satan wants to blow this church, spiritually speaking, right off the face of greater Manchester. Satan is not happy if a few people are hurt, especially if they're repenting and trying to get back to square one. Satan wants to see hundreds of people turning on each other, hundreds of people bitter, hundreds of people just unable to function.

I have had to counsel people who have gone through such hurt. They were unable to function. Some of them had nervous breakdowns in the process.

Some have even committed suicide. We've had several ministers commit suicide in Britain in this recent decade. Half the time, you don't hear about such things.

When are we going to face the reality that as God's people, we are in spiritual warfare? As God's people, we can't afford these flimsy little half-attended prayer meetings. As God's people, we can't afford neglecting the word of God. We can't afford neglecting discipline in our lives.

We cannot afford living in a closet with the shades pulled down so no one knows what's going on. Don't be afraid to weep with those that weep. Don't be afraid to tell your neighbors, yes, we as Christians are not perfect.

We do fail, but God forgives. I never put one of those bumper stickers on my car. Jesus saves and, you know, turn or burn various bumper stickers because I'm not a good enough driver.

Put a Jesus sticker on my car when I'm driving around. The way I drive, I'm usually listening to a sermon and I'm usually praying and I'm just not a good driver. 20 years of driving, I took the British driver's test and failed.

Took it again after much prayer, failed again. Spent 100 pounds on lessons, got the whole world praying for me and finally got my British license. Talk about humility.

My wife, well, I never felt really she should drive. I felt, my wife, driving is not your thing. She announced to me a couple of years ago, I'm going to drive.

What? The British driver's test. You knock and you never pass it. I failed it.

25 years driving. My wife takes a few lessons, goes down, takes a test first time. Passed.

Ever since I've been sitting there in the passenger seat. Failure can be the backdoor to success. Spiritual warfare.

Realizing that a success can be the backdoor to failure. So failure, failure can be the backdoor to success. That disappointment can become God's appointment to go deeper, to deal with real issues, to face Christianity as it is.

By the way, I finally found a bumper sticker that I could put on my car. It says, I'm a Christian, not perfect, only forgiven. Hallelujah.

I will tell you, God can even use those newspaper articles to give you opportunities to share your faith. And we know that what has happened here is happening in every level of government. It's happening in every level of society.

Let's not be naive. It's a plague. It has been for many years.

We don't have to go around with our heads in the sand. We can speak out that we are God's people. Not perfect, only forgiven.

And God can use this event to bring the greatest harvest of souls into your church that you've ever seen in the history of your whole ministry. Looks to me like you've still got a little room. Failure.

Bounce back. Learn how to use it. The sixth, and then we just find difficult, is suffering, especially physical suffering.

I wonder if there's anyone here tonight you're going through a time of physical suffering. I often go to churches and people come up to me after when we pray together, I discover they have terminal cancer. What a challenge that is to me, to meet a man in church rejoicing in Jesus Christ, who knows he's sort of on his way anytime.

I tell you, there is great hope in Jesus Christ. In the midst of suffering, even the most difficult, there is hope. There is peace.

There is assurance from God's word that this life is just so small, like a blade of grass compared to eternity. And God can give grace in the midst of that test. Surely, in one sense, God is preparing all of us for death, all of us for that moment when sometimes you don't have any time if you're killed in an airplane crash, but most people have time to contemplate their death.

One of the great joys this year is to have my father traveling with me, two sessions. He almost came tonight, two six-week periods, because my mother a year ago this month went to be with the Lord. My dad's 83.

He's got a heart condition. He knows he can go anytime. He's a man of faith.

He's a man of God. And he has to see him persevere day by day in joy and with a smile. Today his big feat was to go back from Houston station on his own through London, which he's never done in his entire life.

And he doesn't understand most English people when they're speaking. That's what he says. So he asked for information, which is usually a Pakistani anyway, doesn't understand what they're saying, and tries to get back through London to West Wickham, which is way south.

Anyway, I phoned him from the train and he made it safely. What a joy it's been to be with my own father, because I left home at 18 and hardly ever had time back there. And he's the demonstration, and I know some of you are as well, that in the midst of the great test of suffering, of physical illness, or other kinds of suffering, we can stand.

It's not easy. Sometimes you'll be weeping. Sometimes you'll be frightened.

Great faith is not in the absence of fear. Great faith is as we redirect that fear, which alone actually can give us extra energy. I have great struggle with fear.

It's an energy producer. Turn it around, load it up, shoot it, right back in the devil's face. And men who often have struggled with fear, as been true in my life, do courageous things for God.

Because our strength is not from ourselves, but from God. The last test that I have on my list is the test of a deep infatuation. I didn't write this here in the last few weeks.

I wrote this here many years ago. And I know that some of you, I'm not interested in the past. That's not my big thing, the past.

I know that some of you, in the years to come, are going to be tested through deep infatuation with the opposite sex. Now, a word, first of all, to single people. Because infatuation has to be handled one way by single people and another way by married people.

If you're single and you get a heavy dose of infatuation, there may be something in it. Cool it, think it through, pray, and then take your next step. If you discover the person is a Buddhist, or a Muslim, or a person with the name of Christian, but is not really a Christian, then you're going in difficult, dangerous territory if you start some kind of a relationship.

No matter how much your heart is pounding, no matter how much this lights up all the bulbs in your head and clips your circuits, you're a fool. And the devil, the devil is a specialist in trying to make this emotional thing and the sex thing the biggest thing in our society. The lie comes through the television, the lie comes through our magazines, and it's a distortion.

And a young person, Billy Graham said, if you don't win this victory, he was speaking to 10,000 students when he said it, you lose the biggest battle of the Christian life. I tell you, when I heard that on tape, it hit me like a lightning bolt. And I listened to the tape 20 times.

We've got to declare war against impurity in every form. As a married person, the battle in some ways is easier because you know the moment it's coming at you, and I've had it many times. I had 32 different girlfriends from age four to age 16.

I know a little bit about infatuation. You say it was puppy love, but I'll tell you it was real to this dog. And even after I became a Christian once, I was up in Sweden, I saw a girl, blew every circuit in my head.

I was ready to leave my wife. I was ready to do the most foolish thing a man could ever do. But somehow, I had found these basic biblical principles when I was young and had worked them deep into my life.

Somehow, in God's providence and mercy, and these things are a mystery to some degree, I stood firm. And God took it away as fast as it came. Satan is a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.

And how real this warfare is that we are involved in. I pray that if anyone, anyone here tonight, is fooling around in any way, with any form of impurity, or any infatuation, no matter what kind of emotional trip it gives you, it may even be all fantasy, that by faith, you would turn from it tonight. That you would refuse to go down that road.

I'm sure I spoke about this one other time, of how if we know in our mind a particular road is a dead end street that leads to depression or discouragement or illicit infatuation, then we don't go down that road. We don't start down that road. We don't go near that particular place.

If it's a particular person, then we have to, to some degree, avoid that person, as Billy Graham has practiced. Lest the enemy make a fool of us and try to drag our families and our church into the ditch. I know this is a little strong, and I close with this thought, which I know is heavy.

When Jimmy Swaggart, that big American evangelist, fell into this impurity, humanly speaking, he set the work of God back in the Muslim world 15 years. You cannot believe the mockery we have had from the Muslims over the Swaggart crisis. You may not know anything about this, but Jimmy Swaggart was not my kind of preacher, and I never agreed with him.

But he's a brother, and I loved him, and I tried to pray for him. And I never realized how famous he was until after that fall, and it went on the press throughout the whole world. And Muslims in the marketplace of Peshawar, Pakistan were talking about it.

And in Kuwait, when I got there, and they now have video cassettes that are unbelievable and are showing them to the Muslims all over the world. Because Jimmy Swaggart, before that, or in the midst of that, had debated one of the leading Muslims in the world. So you can imagine what is being said in the Muslim world.

The crisis that we have faced here can be used mightily of God. The crisis of your own personal situation in one of these seven areas can be used of God, but it will take a lot of prayer. It will take a lot of diligence, a lot of work, a lot of openness, and honesty, and reality.

And I pray that all of us would be willing to pay that price. God can turn it around. He already has.

Let us pray. Our God and Father, we thank you for your grace, which is sufficient in the midst of weakness. We thank you that we can have, on one hand, the strongest challenge toward holiness and purity, and on the other hand, the strongest message of mercy, and grace, and forgiveness.

That our broken world can be rebuilt. That our broken lives can be rebuilt. That failure can be the back door to success.

And we believe that by your grace, you are going to use this church, this fellowship, more than ever before. We stand on your promises. We stand on your word.

We turn from our own feelings, our own hurts, maybe our own doubts, and our own confusions, our easy questioning, why, Lord, we turn from that? For we are not your counselor. And we give ourselves wholly to you to do your will and to use the small tests of life to prepare us for the big one that may be coming down the road. And if we ever fail that one, which is the worst thing we can ever do in many ways, then we still believe there is a second opportunity.

Because your grace and your mercy is without end. And we are your children. We are your family.

And you love us as much when we have fallen flat on our face as when we're standing winning five people to Jesus. Oh, Lord, we thank you. And we praise you.

And we worship you together. In Jesus' name, amen.

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