

A Christian'S Greatest Trial

Wearing Out the Saints

John O. Reid (1930-2016)

Given 30-Dec-00; Sermon #481

Proverbs 22:3 A prudent man foresees the evil [danger], and hides himself: but the simple pass on, and are punished.

There is a principle involved in this proverb that is applied in the military, in business, in health, and in the church today. With any organization whose continuation depends on its being healthy or sound, the ability to foresee the danger that confronts them and to prepare to confront that danger—or, hide from it—is of vital importance.

The military is forced to consider the forces they must meet in combat. How large are they? What weapons will they use? What will their tactics be? What terrain will the soldier have to fight over? What weather conditions is he going to have to fight in? What will they be like? (Hot? Freezing? Wet?) The information is taken and put into a plan of action, and part of the action is to prepare the troops for what they are going to be facing. This preparation, of course, is called **training**. We all understand that.

The new recruit, as well as the seasoned veteran, is informed as to what he is going to have to face. He is taught to handle the weapons that he is going to need. He is exposed to the climate that he will be fighting in. He is trained physically, so that he will be able to stand up to the physical rigors of combat. He is forced to experience live fire and explosions around him—that he might not be terrified when, in fact, he is exposed to it.

All of this is done so that when the foreseen evil does present itself, the soldier will not collapse in confusion or terror. Rather, that he will be ready to face it. This does not mean that he will not be afraid, or that there will not be some confusion. But it does mean that because he knows what to expect and has been well prepared to face it, he has a good chance to survive.

The same principle is followed in the business world as well. I was in the sales field; and in a difficult sales market the sales manager has the responsibility of seeing to it that his salesmen are going to be successful. He does this by noting the resistance in any market. What are the customers like? What do his sales people have to face?

Then he does something that is called "role playing." The sales manager becomes the

A Christian's Greatest Trial by John O. Reid (1930-2016) (<http://www.cgg.org>)

purchasing agent. And, knowing what his people are going to have to face (and I have done this many times), he makes them make the sales presentation to him, in front of everybody. (You always hate to have to do that—when you have to do these things in front of your peers. But nevertheless, we had to do it.) And he would give responses to their sales presentation that would be really difficult for the salesman to answer. He did this so that they would learn to overcome the objections; and so that, when they got into the field, they might not lose heart. Rather, that they might have intelligent and sound answers for the objections that the customers had. Thus, they could help the customer make a wise purchase.

We all know that this type of training takes place in the fire departments and the police departments as well. They perceive the dangers that the individuals will have to be facing. It is identified, and then steps are taken to set forth and instruct those having to confront it—on how to handle it, that they might be safe and successful on the jobs they have to do.

Again, **the key** to success in these situations is to accurately *identify the danger* that is to be faced. God understood this principle long before man did. And as such, He set for us to note the overall danger that would be facing the church at this end time. Although we have seen many dangers (the market crash, the Beast power, the mark of the Beast, famine, and drought), yet it might surprise you what the real danger is *for us*—as identified by God.

Please turn over to Daniel 7. We have all had this chapter, and the Beast, and everything else explained to us many times in booklets, etc. That really is not my purpose this afternoon. That is prophecy, and I really am not good at prophecy.

But today I would like for you to put yourself in Daniel's shoes, or sandals (whatever the case may be). Let's say that you have never before heard any explanation. In fact, you have never heard this prophecy before. This has never come to you. And you have never before heard a synopsis or an overview of events that are going to take place *from* the time of Daniel *to* the conclusion of the age. This is the whole thing in capsule form. And the vision that you had stuns you, and it forces question after question to come into your mind.

Daniel 7:1-3 In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon Daniel had a dream and visions of his head upon his bed: then he wrote the dream, and told the sum of the matters. [Or, he told the main facts of what he had dreamt of.] Daniel spoke and said, I saw in my vision by night, and, behold, the four winds of the heaven strove upon the great sea. And four great

A Christian's Greatest Trial by John O. Reid (1930-2016) (<http://www.cgg.org>)
beasts came up from the sea, diverse one from another.

And then he describes the four beasts.

Daniel 7:7-11 After this I saw in the night visions, and behold a fourth beast [This is the one that we are going to be dealing with.], dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly. And it had great iron teeth. It devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it; and it was diverse [different] from all the beasts that were before it; and it had ten horns. I considered the horns, and, behold, there came up among them another little horn, before whom there were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots. And, behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of man, and a mouth speaking great things. I beheld till the thrones were cast down [put in place]. And the Ancient of days [God the Father] did sit down [this is a synopsis of everything here] whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire. A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment [court] was set [seated], and the books were opened. I beheld then because of the voice of the great words which the horn spoke: I beheld even till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame.

Daniel 7:13-14 I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man [Jesus Christ] came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.

This is what Daniel saw, and he was grieved. He stood there just stunned.

Daniel 7:15-18 I Daniel was grieved in my spirit in the midst of my body, and the visions of my head troubled me. [He did not know what to make of it.] I came near unto one of them that stood by, and asked him the truth of all this. So he told me, and made me know the interpretation of the things. These great beasts, which are four, are four kings [with kingdoms], which shall arise

A Christian's Greatest Trial by John O. Reid (1930-2016) (<http://www.cgg.org>)

out of the earth. But the saints of the most High shall take [receive] the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever.

But then he stops, and he thought, "Tell me about the fourth beast. That's the one that is so bad."

Daniel 7:19-21 Then I would know the truth of the fourth beast, which was diverse from all the others, exceeding dreadful, whose teeth were of iron, and his nails of brass; which devoured, brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with his feet. And of the ten horns that were in his head, and of the other which came up, and before whom three fell; even of that horn that had eyes, and a mouth that spoke very great things [pompous words], whose look was more stout than his fellows. I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them.

So we begin to get an idea of what is coming.

Daniel 7:22-23 Until the Ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom. Thus he said, The fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom upon earth, which shall be diverse from all kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, and shall tread it down, and break it in pieces.

Daniel 7:25 And he shall speak great words against the most High, [And here is the danger.] and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time [3 ½ years].

So here we see, brethren, that the fourth beast is the beast that we have to deal with. His intent is to change times and to devour the earth. It is Satan working through this adversary, who will endeavor to *wear out* the saints.

The term "wear out the saints" is #1080 in Strong's. It means *to mentally wear out, to exhaust* them. Thus we see the danger (identified by God through Daniel) as Satan working through this end time leader **to wear out the saints**—those who hold the truth of God. That is, to make them lose out, if at all possible, on their salvation. Why does he

A Christian's Greatest Trial by John O. Reid (1930-2016) (<http://www.cgg.org>)

do this? God has called us to be members of the very God Family—something that Satan and his demons could never be. And thus to thwart us from obtaining our goal, in Satan's mind, is to thwart God Himself from accomplishing His goal.

I do not think we really realize (and I do not mean to sound pompous or puffed up) how **special** we are to God. We are not any better than anybody else in the world; but God is working with us through His Spirit. He has a future for us that nobody else has, at this time. And so Satan really wants to stop this.

We should not forget either that Satan already has the world, but we are the living evidence that God's plan is working. To destroy us, as Satan reasons, is (again) to destroy God's plan. But God through His vision to Daniel has identified the principle danger that we must face as that of becoming *worn out mentally* and giving up. That is the principle danger!

If we are to stand against this danger, we must come to understand the many means that Satan will employ to accomplish his goal of wearing us out. There are so many things that attack us, that it is not always easy to clarify what, or who, the enemy is. But there is a significant area of Scripture that we will come to in a moment that helps to identify that.

For one thing, right now the church is in tremendous confusion. That, of itself, causes our minds to be in confusion and to wear, and puts strain upon us. In the greater church of God today we have the confusion of "goal." What is the Work? Is it reaching the world with a tremendous broadcast, or preparing the Bride? What is the most important?

We have confusion of direction. What is God after in each one of us? True obedience, or just sort of being a nice person (as I have been told, a few times)? There is confusion about law keeping. Is God harsh? Is He easy? Or is He sort of in between? Or do we just have to love Him?

There is confusion regarding prophecy. Was Mr. Armstrong right, or are all the many other confusions 'out there' that we hear today correct? We have confusion of doctrine. Do we tithe? (That has come up.) Are the holy days and the Sabbath done away with? Is the Hebrew calendar the correct calendar in God's sight? Do we count from the morrow after the Sabbath during the Days of Unleavened Bread, or from the first holy day, when the Passover falls on the Sabbath?

We have confusion as to which of the many churches is the correct one to attend. This is just sort of tongue and cheek, because I am sure that they are all God's churches; but

A Christian's Greatest Trial by John O. Reid (1930-2016) (<http://www.cgg.org>)

we have four that state that they are "the true church." We have confusion as to who Mr. Armstrong was. Was he God's apostle that God put here and gave instruction, divinely, for us to come to understand and to grow from? Or (as I have been told) was he just the Pastor General? Or was he just another minister—no better or worse than others?

You see—all these things very subtly wear on our minds and cause confusion, and tire us out as we struggle to keep to the trunk of the tree that we must keep to. Is it God's intent that we be confused? The answer, of course, is "No!" But for those who go their own way, as it says in Romans 1, that they who deny God are confused. And they glorify God not, nor are thankful. Thus, their foolish heart is darkened; and they, thinking themselves wise, became as fools.

Now *the principle* that I told you about—that we can begin to count on here, and to look toward as a sign—is encompassed by probably eight scriptures that I am going to go through fairly rapidly. ***What does God want from His people?***

I Corinthians 14:33 For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.

In other words, God is not "into" confusion.

I Corinthians 1:10 Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.

I Corinthians 12:25 That there should be no schism [or, divisions] in the body [in the church]; but that the members should have the same care one for another.

That is, operating from God's Spirit.

II Corinthians 13:11 Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect [complete], be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you.

A Christian's Greatest Trial by John O. Reid (1930-2016) (<http://www.cgg.org>)

One of Mrs. Armstrong's favorite scriptures was Psalm 133, and she would always quote verse one.

Psalm 133:1 How good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!

Romans 12:16 Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits.

Romans 15:5-6 Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus: That you may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Philippians 1:27 Only let your conversation [conduct] be as it becomes the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel.

Philippians 2:2 Fulfill you my joy, that you be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.

Philippians 3:16 Nevertheless, whereto [or, to the degree that] we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.

It is important to God that we all be of one mind. And when we find that we are not, that should be a little warning bell that goes off.

Ephesians 4:1 I [Paul] therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that you walk worthy of the vocation wherewith you are called.

He is saying, "Really consider the wonderful things that have been given to you. And

A Christian's Greatest Trial by John O. Reid (1930-2016) (<http://www.cgg.org>)

see that you walk worthy to that calling." That is, that you give right ethical responses to the fact that you have been called.

Ephesians 4:2-4 With all lowliness [humbleness] and meekness [gentleness], with longsuffering [patience], forbearing one another in love; endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as you are called in one hope of your calling.

There are not "a lot." There is one!

Ephesians 4:5-6 One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

So, this confusion does not come from God. God wants us all to be of the same mind, operating from the same Spirit. It is evident from these scriptures that this confusion is not from God. It is from another source. But it is being used by God for a special purpose—which we are going to see today.

Mr. Armstrong said that many times Satan thinks that he is destroying us by causing trials and confusion. The fact is that God is using Satan's effort against us to force us not to let down, but to resist the lies and to stand fast in faithfulness to Him. Do not ever forget that.

Peter has something to tell us about trials. Turn with me to I Peter 1. We will start with verse 3 and go through verse 7 because it is very encouraging.

I Peter 1:3-7 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy has begotten us again unto a lively hope [Not a false hope, but a true hope—a living hope.] by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fades not away, reserved in heaven for you, [That is what this calling is all about.] who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. Wherein you greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, you are in heaviness [or, distress] through manifold temptations. That the trial of [the genuineness of] your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perishes, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.

What he is saying is that, when Jesus Christ appears, you will be glad and thrilled that you have gone through all the trials that you have been through. (We will cover that part of it later, too.) He says that we are to rejoice in the hope of our salvation, even though for a season (or, a short period) we might have to suffer (or, suffer trial). Compared to eternity, it is just a drop in a bucket. Even if all of your life you had to suffer, it would be nothing.

And he said, if need be (if the trial is specifically needed to produce a desired change in you, or in me), do not be discouraged by the trial or all of the temptations that come. Rather, realize that God is doing something **specific** in your life. Why? Because the testing of your faith is of tremendous value. Trials are designed to show if our faith and trust in God is pure.

Peter is showing us that the testing of our faith is far more important than the testing of gold, which passes away. And even though gold seems impervious to the elements, it does wear away over a period of time. But the proven genuine faith will last throughout all eternity and be found unto praise and honor and glory—at the appearing of Jesus Christ.

Brethren, this is an exceedingly important part of our calling and development. Without the attempt **to wear out the saints**, God knows that we would not have enough character or spiritual strength built into us to accomplish the wonderful work that He has in store for us to do. He put this here deliberately. God's in charge of everything. The pressure that He puts on us is **for our good**. So it is absolutely essential that we have the pressure and the attempt to wear us out.

When we first come into the church, we all get excited about the place of safety. (And I am still excited about that.) But we tend to look at being safe and having the pressure taken off of us. But I am here to tell you that is not the case. By our calling, we are required to become a new person. By our calling, that means that we have to work to measure up to the standard of Jesus Christ.

God tells us over and over again that we are going to have to make decisions against popular thinking in this world, against personal desires, against some in the congregation with different doctrines and wrong teachings. And this is going to produce trial. It is going to produce "wearing out" of your mind, mentally—because of the anguish that you have to go through.

Not only that, but we are going to have to *individually* make these decisions. It is not going to be a collective thing. This will require that we study—that we get into the

A Christian's Greatest Trial by John O. Reid (1930-2016) (<http://www.cgg.org>)

correspondence course and into our Bibles, and truly understand what God's will is—and then faithfully stand for it. This is what God wants to see from each one of us.

And though we may not want this wearing out, or these trials, to come upon us, we have to ask the question: We live in "fat America," where we have all the conveniences. "How about those who went before us?" Did they have to face trials? Are we any different than they are? Perhaps we are in the environment we are in, but we have to go through trials too.

Did God subject them to be "worn out"—by Satan, and by trials? You bet He did! Did Satan work to "wear out" the ministry? Again, you bet he did! Far more did he "wear out" the ministry in the old days. It is just unbelievable what they went through. In II Corinthians 1, Paul is telling them what he had to go through.

II Corinthians 1:9-10 But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raises the dead; who delivered us from so great a death, and does deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us.

Paul starts out by saying that he wants the brethren to understand the great difficulty that they were under. There seems to have been some recent trouble; and they were weighed down by calamity exceedingly—fully expecting to die. I do not know what the reason was that they [thought they] were going to die. Maybe it was because they had to fight the beasts, or maybe by the hands of the people (who just hated them). But it was so bad that the apostle Paul gave up of being able to do anything of himself. There was nothing he could do. He was helpless.

He had to place total reliance on God. He even thought about, "Well, You are the God who resurrects. If I get killed, maybe You'll resurrect me." And then he states that not only did God deliver them, but he reminds us today that God continues to deliver those who are His. We should never forget that, and always look to that hope. (This was a very serious time for Paul.)

II Corinthians 7:5 For when we were come into Macedonia, our flesh had no rest. . .

When people want to break somebody else down, that is one of the ways they do it. They do not give them any rest.

II Corinthians 7:5 . . .but we were troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears.

This is what the apostle Paul went through. Paul states that, when he was in Macedonia, he was being stressed on every side—to the maximum. He was attacked on every side, or in every way, and from every quarter. From without were fightings. He was constantly harassed with a fierce opposition, which he met when preaching the gospel. The opposition came from the Jews and from false brethren.

Then he states that within him were fears. Now, ministers never have any fears? Paul did. One of his fears was would he get out alive. Then he thought, "How about the letter that I sent to the Corinthians, to correct them (for the incest that was going on in the church)?" Would they take it? Or would they leave God's church, because of the correction?

All of these things were going on in Paul's mind; and the pressure to wear Paul out was there. Again, we have the example that Paul never quit—despite the pressure. And there was *horrendous* pressure! Yet he never quit. So, let us look at some of the things that he went through. For one thing, there were false apostles and so forth going on here. We will start in II Corinthians 11:19, and look to see how Paul defines his ministry here. (He's talking to the church.)

II Corinthians 11:19 For you suffer [put up with] fools gladly, seeing you yourselves are wise.

In other words, these were strange teachers that had come in and were trying to pervert them; and he says, "You put up with them—thinking that you're so smart."

II Corinthians 11:20-23 For you suffer [put up], if a man bring you into bondage [to go back to the old ways], if a man devour you, if a man take of you, if a man exalt himself, if a man smite you on the face [You put up with him!]. I speak as concerning reproach, as though we had been weak. [People had been laughing at Paul, and condemning him.] Howbeit whereinsoever any is bold, (I speak foolishly,) I am bold also. Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? So am I. Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prison more frequent, in deaths oft. [That is, exposed to death.]

Paul was saying here that these were false ministers of Christ. But notice the yardstick that he is about to measure by—his ministry versus their ministry. It was the yardstick of trial brought about by standing firm for the truth, without compromise. It is the payment that comes in the form of trials for fully preaching the gospel. It is the determination to finish the job, when every attempt is made to wear one down. That is what Paul measured by.

II Corinthians 11:24-26 Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep. In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren.

These are some of the things that Paul had to go through, and Satan was trying to wear him down.

II Corinthians 11:27-31 In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. [Not many of us have had to go through those types of things.] Beside those things that are without, that which comes upon me daily, the care of all the churches. [That was a heavy responsibility to Paul.] Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is offended, and I burn not? If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is blessed for evermore, knows that I lie not.

He said, "All that I tell you is true. This is what God has put me through for the gospel's sake—for preaching the truth." And he concludes:

II Corinthians 11:32-33 In Damascus the governor under Aretas the king kept the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desirous to apprehend me: And through a window in a basket was I let down by the wall, and escaped his hands.

This is the kind of trauma (this is the type of "wearing out") that God's ministers had to go through. Paul, Luke, John, Matthew, Peter, Jude—all of those were faithful in preaching the truth, and they were continually tried by the process of attempting to wear

A Christian's Greatest Trial by John O. Reid (1930-2016) (<http://www.cgg.org>)

them out. But contrary to Satan's desire to destroy them, they only **became stronger**—because the trials drove them to be closer to Jesus Christ.

That is something that we might want to remember. Is it just the ministry that sets the example of trials? Not on your life! We know of Abraham having to leave the country and going to a strange land, leaving everything. Moses giving up being a king in Egypt, and luxury, to be with the people of Israel.

Hebrews 11:31 By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace.

Rahab fully knew that her life would be forfeited if they found the spies. And yet she had faith in God, and trusted Him.

II Corinthians 11:32-35 And what shall I more say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthah; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection.

So here we see that we have Rahab (You know what happened to her.), and Gideon, and Barak. They knew that what they were required to do could cause them their death. And they had mental 'second thoughts' before they could act. But yet, it did not wear them out. They trusted God. Samson, who slipped and dishonored God, went through much mental anguish; and he was faithful to the very end.

David—what can you say of David? He had been through everything. He slew Goliath. He numbered the people. The adultery with Bathsheba, the pressures in the court, fears—everything encompassed him; but he was not worn down, and he did not quit.

Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego—can you imagine the pressure of being thrown into a lion's den, or into the fiery furnace? And yet they were firm in their conviction. All of these men—and many more that have gone before us—went through trials designed to wear them out. Instead, it caused them to draw close to God in

A Christian's Greatest Trial by John O. Reid (1930-2016) (<http://www.cgg.org>)

faithfulness. This proved to be **the result that God wanted** from them.

Hebrews 11:36-38 And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (of whom the world was not worthy). They wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.

These are those who have gone before us. They had these trials upon them; and yet they never stopped. They never gave up. It is interesting to note here too that God let them do it. He did not make everything "peachy-keen" for them. Rather, He let them go through it.

Where do we find our trials come from today, in the church? The truly difficult ones come from **within**, because they surprise us. I once heard a mechanical "Abraham Lincoln" over at an exhibit in Disney Land. He stood up there and he said that nothing will destroy America from without (because that would raise all Americans up, and they would defend the country), but America can be destroyed from within.

The Worldwide Church of God was in the same boat. If some other organization came and said, "You are wrong," there would be nobody that would fall for it. But it came from **within**.

II Thessalonians 2:1-3 Now we beseech you, brethren, by [concerning] the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, that you be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us [That is, someone sending a letter in our name.], as that the day of Christ is at hand [or, has come]. Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition.

He is saying, "Don't be deceived, because this day won't come except there first comes a falling away." After numerous other explanations, Albert Barnes stated that this means a falling away from a large organization with one man at its head. I thought that was sort of interesting. This was what he finally came down to. This came from **within**, and it caused great stress. And God, as you know, brought this upon us—for our good. He truly did. God wants us to understand these things so that we can be prepared. This is

A Christian's Greatest Trial by John O. Reid (1930-2016) (<http://www.cgg.org>)

part of our "being prepared." This is hard for some of us to believe, but it is the truth.

I Corinthians 11:19 For there must be also heresies [or, factions] among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you.

What is being said here is that it must be (It is necessary. It is to be expected.) that there are factions, or differences, among you. Not differences about how you wear your necktie and things like that. Those with different thinking in doctrines or in following a different message—their different opinions will lead them to exhibit a different religious practice. The church should have been of one mind, one body; but he said, "Now it is split into differing sects and differing parties."

Why? Again, "that those who are approved"—or those who are the friends of God—might stand out as living His laws. They would show who loves order and peace, and who had faith in the truth and pursued it. He said, "There **must be** factions among you." It is these divisions, which take place within our ranks, which wear at us. They really do. And we are warned that we are going to have false teachers as well.

II Peter 2:1-3 But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you [That applies to us today.], who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious [destructive] ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of [but not out loud]. And through covetousness shall they with feigned [deceptive] words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingers not, and their damnation slumbers not.

Peter brings out that we have to have false teachers. We are going to have false teachers. There will be false teachers, and they will work to "wear us out." That is what is on the horizon. (To cause us to doubt and to challenge the belief that we have been given.) These will come among our midst, and seem to be with us. They will be friendly, and shake hands, and all—while ever so craftily denying God.

Now, they do not deny God by saying, "Well, I am just really against Jesus Christ." They would never do that. They deny God by **denying His truth** and, ever so slowly, attempting to move some over to the wrong teaching. And in doing so, they are to bring swift destruction upon themselves and, in the end, on those who follow them.

A Christian's Greatest Trial by John O. Reid (1930-2016) (<http://www.cgg.org>)

He says, "Many will follow their lascivious ways." Their teaching leads to wrong ways of living before God. They do all of this because of covetousness. It may not be because of money. It may be because of power that they are after, and control. Because of this, they cause many that believed the truth to turn and go after their folly. And God, through Peter, tells us that their judgment is not far from coming.

Again, we see that these events work to *wear us down* as we see loved ones fooled by these deceptions. But those who know the truth *stand*—even in these difficult times. God continually warns us of what we must face, even in the parables.

Matthew 13:24-26 Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field. But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also.

I talked to Bill Keese, over in the Missouri area; and he brought out that you cannot really tell the tares in the beginning. He said that, when you look out into a field of wheat—*after* it gets to the point of being ripe—*then* the tares stand out unbelievably (like a big white blotch in the middle of the wheat). And they are easily spotted then.

Matthew 13:27-30 So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, did not you sow good seed in your field? From whence then has it tares? He said unto them, An enemy has done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt you then that we go and gather them up? But he said, Nay; lest while you gather up the tares, you root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest. And in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather you together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.

Over in verse 36, we start to get the explanation.

Matthew 13:36-43 Then Jesus sent the multitude away, and went into the house. And his disciples came unto him, saying, Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field. He answered and said unto them, He that sows the good seed is the Son of man [Jesus Christ]. The field is the world. The good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one [that are going to bring confusion, and destruction, and pressure

A Christian's Greatest Trial by John O. Reid (1930-2016) (<http://www.cgg.org>)

in the church]. The enemy that sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire. There shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then [at that time] shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who has ears to hear, let him hear.

So after the good seed had been sown, but before it had been harrowed into the ground, the enemy (Satan) came and planted the tares. Those were the false doctrines and teachings. These are those who are captured by an idea, or a twig, or a concept and cause others to begin to focus on that as well, and to get away from the trunk of the tree.

When the tares were discovered, they were so much like wheat that they were not noticed until they began to ripen. Then they were not pulled up, because their roots were entwined with the roots of the wheat; and, therefore, they could not be pulled up.

Another man sent me a study that he had done on tares. It is interesting that the choice of tares in this parable further illustrates the danger to the good seed. According to *Easton's Bible Dictionary*, a tare is a kind of darnel plant—*lolium temulentum*—a species of rye grass, the seed of which is a strong soporific poison. It is interesting what this poison does. It puts animals, or people, to sleep. It is like a sleeping potion, according to the dictionary. And it bears the closest resemblance to wheat, *until* the ears appear. This can only be discovered then. And evidently this wheat, of course, was wholesome and nutritious; but the tares were far more harmful. They were dangerously poisonous.

What are the lessons that we are to learn from them? I thought that Albert Barnes had a pretty good list here. He said: (1) That hypocrites and deceived persons must be in the church. (2) That this is the work of the enemy of God's people—to poison and cause confusion and damage to God's people. (3) That all hope of removing them is in vain, and (4) to try would cause injury to those called. And (5) that Christ Himself will do this, through His angels, when the end comes. In the meantime, all of us have to stay alert and be on guard as to what the truth really is, and to stand.

Now, brethren, who do we fight against? I think that this is something that we really have to understand. Ephesians 6 is a familiar scripture. I would like to put special emphasis on this. You will see why, in a moment.

A Christian's Greatest Trial by John O. Reid (1930-2016) (<http://www.cgg.org>)

Ephesians 6:10 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.

Through all of this, God is working with you. He will not let you fall. But we are to be strong in His power and in His might.

Ephesians 6:11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

The word "wiles" here properly means that which is traced out with a method. It truly means **a planned attack**. It is not something that we stumble into. It is that which is laid out with art, skill, and cunning to specifically destroy us.

I think that we feel that we are not all that important. But you see, as heirs to the Kingdom of God (especially in God's sight), we are exceedingly important to Satan. [His wiles are] that which is laid out with skill and cunning to specifically destroy us.

Ephesians 6:12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

I remember years ago that Mr. Armstrong [was visited by] a man from Europe (an ambassador of some sort). This man made a comment, and he said, "You know, you in this country don't believe in the devil. You are too sophisticated. You are too well off. But in our country, we know that there is a devil." And, of course, that has to be Satan's greatest advantage—if we do not believe that he is there. But he surely is, and he has a planned method of attack for us. He knows your weakness, my weakness; and he is going to do all that he can to see that we fail.

We more easily fight in an open fight. We can handle this, with an up-front enemy. But Satan does not carry on open warfare. We must remember this. He approaches us covertly, from ambush, with plausible ideas. From cunning (rather than power), he seeks to delude and cause us to betray our calling by *subtleties* (instead of force). I think that it is absolutely essential that we understand this.

The sense of the term "we wrestle" is that we are truly ***in combat***. Thus, we must take on the armor of God. Yes, we have the physical to overcome; but our true fight is with

A Christian's Greatest Trial by John O. Reid (1930-2016) (<http://www.cgg.org>)

demons—the invisible spirits of wickedness, principalities (high-ranking demons to whom powers were given), against the rulers of darkness. That is who we fight against. I do not think we really see it. We just seem to stumble on our way. If it were not for God, we would be overcome.

What is their purpose? You all know what it is—to wear us out, causing us to miss out on the Kingdom of God. Thus, we have to put on the armor of God. In addition to attacks that come from within the church, we also have attacks from the world.

Ephesians 6:13 Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

That term "the evil day" means the day when **you** are in trial—the day when the specific trial comes to you. That is your day to have to fight.

Ephesians 6:14-18 Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth [Truth is exceedingly important.], and having on the breastplate of righteousness [or, right living]. And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. [Blessed are the peacemakers.] Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith you shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. [Because you have faith in God. You know what you have been taught. You have faith, and you are not going to stumble to all that is going on.] And take the helmet of salvation [the hope of the Kingdom of God, and the future], and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God [because that is how you fight]. Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.

Perseverance is exceedingly important.

We also have to face the pulls of this world. Let us turn over to I John, because this is certainly part of it. John knew that you have to fight the devil. Somehow we think that maybe only Paul knew that, but if you read verse 14:

I John 2:14 I have written unto you, fathers, because you have known him that is from the beginning. I have written unto you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the wicked one.

John also knew that we have to fight Satan. It was quite clear to him. So he says:

I John 2:15-16 Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

And then he says something that should make us all really stop and consider.

I John 2:17 And the world passes away, and the lust thereof: but he that does the will of God abides forever.

What he is saying is that the world is going to be gone. So he is telling us not to love this Babylonian system that is "our world." We are not to fix our affection on what the world can furnish as being premier, or most important, in our thinking. We are not to be influenced by the *mind* of this world—how this world thinks—to where we conduct our lives according to what the world accepts as being correct.

We are not to allow our moral lifestyle to be one that is acceptable to the world—but only by God. In short, we are not to live the world's way—nor to think with the world's mind. We are not to lust after the things that pamper wrong appetites within us. That takes **control**, and that puts a strain on us—and stress. We are not to lust after things that wrongly please the eye or promote the pride of life. We are called to be different.

We are called in this end time, in the most powerful society on the face of the earth today. We will probably see the culmination of the effect of sin on this earth. Because of this, we have *an intensity of pressure* put upon us to give up. We are being pressed on every side, and in every area; and we will find it hard to maintain God's way. But if we know this is coming, perhaps we can prepare for it.

We have to consider something else as well. All who are called must follow the path that Jesus Christ took—of facing the wearing out of the saints and overcoming. That is for us. We must follow the path that Jesus Christ took.

Hebrews 2:9 But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.

He was the perfect sacrifice. He was here, and He had to suffer; and yet, when He finished His suffering (His trials), He was crowned with glory and honor.

Hebrews 2:10 For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons into glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.

That is the path that He had to go through. Jesus was human—that He might fully experience everything that we have to go through. And because of experiencing these things fully—and overcoming them—again, He was crowned with glory and honor, and is become the perfect sacrifice for us today.

What did He suffer? What did He have to go through? What was His *wearing out*? Aside from His own pulls (which He had to keep in check), He had to face the hatred of the Jews (who hated His message and wanted to kill Him). He had to face Satan—in Matthew 4 and Luke 4, where Satan tempted Him. He said, "IF you be the Son of God, THEN turn these stones into bread" because he knew He was hungry. Satan said, "IF you are the Son of God, THEN throw Yourself down off the pinnacle and prove that You won't be hurt" (because the angels are going to bear You up). He touched His vanity.

And then, to Jesus Christ (whom I am sure longed to take over this world and treat it correctly) Satan said, "IF you'll worship me, THEN I'll let you do it right now." Again, Christ was tested; but He rejected Satan. And when He did that (when He refused), He was again tried by Satan in the scourging and the crucifixion. You see, Jesus Christ faced many trials.

Knowing that the wearing out of the saints is the overall danger that we have to face (no matter what form it takes), what steps are we to take to meet this danger and to be victorious? I think that the first step is to realize that we all have trials. Not necessarily the same trials, but the difficulties that will cause us to build the character that we need. And God is going to see to it that it is done, because He loves us. He is preparing us for something absolutely awesome, and so we are going to have the trials that we need.

The second point is to understand that, with the calling we have been given, we are now different than the world that we live in. As we stand up for the truth, we are going to be hated. We all try to be "wise as a serpent and harmless as a dove." And we have not had to stand up too many times. Some have at work, and things like this. But, as we

A Christian's Greatest Trial by John O. Reid (1930-2016) (<http://www.cgg.org>)

stand up, we are going to be hated; because the carnal mind is enmity towards God. That does not seem fair. That does not seem right. But that is exactly how it is.

Turn over to John 15, and we will see what Jesus Christ had to say about this. He really wants us to get this through our heads.

John 15:18-21 If the world hate you, you know that it hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love his own: but because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me [for standing up for the truth], they will also persecute you [for standing up for the truth]; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also. But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me.

So Jesus is saying, "Don't expect friendship with the world. And don't let down, because it isn't there." Delores and I never had to keep Christmas, but we have had three new families move into our block. We have let them know that we do not keep Christmas; but I got a "mince pie" candle with a wick sticking up in the middle of it. And I did not want that thing. But they sent it to me; and they also gave our little grandson, Spencer, a gift. So now we have to face this again.

We went for years, and the neighbors did not mind the no Christmas lights. But now we have to face this, and we are going to have to tell them, "Look, we just don't keep Christmas." I realize that they do not understand why we do not. I am not sure what will take place there. And I am not sure the attitude they will have after we reinforce the fact that we do not keep Christmas. So it is that type of thing.

Christ said that this should be a reality in our mind. We should not expect the world to understand what we are doing, because they just do not. If we understand this reality, then we will not be overcome by what we have to face. That is part of the training that we have to have, and He wants us to understand it. He said, "Why? I have chosen you out of the world and have separated you from this society. You live by a different set of laws, rules, and character. Therefore, don't expect the world to be like you. They didn't even think that I came from God. So they certainly won't think that you are living God's laws. Thus, when you observe God's laws, you are going to be ridiculed."

I Peter 4:12-13 Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is

A Christian's Greatest Trial by John O. Reid (1930-2016) (<http://www.cgg.org>)

to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you. But rejoice, inasmuch as you are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed [at the end time, when He returns], you may be glad also with exceeding joy.

And I have got to tell you, that is the time when you are going to be thrilled. When Christ returns, if you have done it correctly, you are going to be **thrilled**.

I Peter 4:14-17 If you be reproached [or, insulted] for the name of Christ, happy are you; for the spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters. Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf. For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God; and if it first begin at us, what shall be the end of them that obey not the gospel of God?

The word "judgment" here seems to mean **severe trial**—a trial that will determine *character* and *faithfulness*. It refers to conditions that would settle the question, once and for all, about our values in relation to our calling. And it will begin in the church—individually, I am sure.

I Peter 4:18 And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?

He said, "If the righteous be saved with great difficulty (great trial, great tribulation)." As one commentator stated, that there would be obstacles in our path that would have to be surmounted, that would have to be overcome. This is what He is talking about here. And then, in verse 19, it becomes personal, and we begin to see what our response should be.

I Peter 4:19 Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator.

He said, "Let them that suffer according to the will of God." That is, *endure the sufferings*

A Christian's Greatest Trial by John O. Reid (1930-2016) (<http://www.cgg.org>)

that He shall appoint. In all of this, it is God who watches carefully over us—to perfect us, and to bring us to what He is developing us to be. Peter tells us that God can be trusted in all of His relations with us, in which He sustains us. He has called us, and He is working with us. And, as it says in Philippians 1:6, we can be confident that He who has started this good work in us will complete it. He will not let it go.

Again, what should our response be? No matter what circumstance we find ourselves in, we should be found doing what is correct. No matter what the trial, we should still be *obeying God and doing what is correct.*

We have seen that the intent of Satan, no matter in whatever fashion, is to wear us out. We have seen that God puts us through trials to develop us. And, based on this, again what should our conduct be? Probably there is no better example (aside from Jesus Christ) of a man who had been through everything than King David, who had gone through so many difficult trials. He said:

Psalm 37:1-3 Fret not yourself because of evildoers, neither be you envious against the workers of iniquity. For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb. Trust in the LOORD, and do good; so shall you dwell in the land, and verily you shall be fed.

He said, "Don't allow yourselves to be filled with anger, and frustration, and envy because men who cause difficulties exist at this time. The time is coming when they will be cut down."

Psalm 37:4-6 Delight yourself also in the LOORD; and he shall give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way unto the LOORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass [all that you desire]. And he shall bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your judgment as the noon day.

When the time comes, righteousness is going shine like the sun. He shall bring forth your righteousness in the brightest part of the day.

Psalm 37:7-11 Rest in the LOORD, and wait patiently for him. Fret not yourself because of him who prospers in his way, because of the man who brings wicked devices [or, schemes] to pass. Cease from anger, and forsake wrath. Fret not yourself in any wise to do evil. [Do not respond.] For evildoers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the LOORD, they shall inherit the earth. For

A Christian's Greatest Trial by John O. Reid (1930-2016) (<http://www.cgg.org>)

yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be. Yea, you shall diligently consider his place, and it shall not be. [Consider what is going to happen to him, as a result of his actions.] But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.

That is what David told us to do. He said, "Commit your burdens to Christ. Set your feet on the right path, and live in the right manner; and He'll provide the right result for you. Wait in patience and confidence, not worrying about the enemy. Don't let anger take over and cause you do evil, because evildoers won't be here. Wait on God; and you are going to see a wonderful, wonderful result."

The author of Hebrews (probably Paul) reminds us to consider those who have gone before us.

Hebrews 12:1-2 Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight [every weight that encumbers us from running the race], and the sin which does so easily beset us [ensnare, or trap us]. And let us run with patience [perseverance] the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author [originator] and finisher [perfector] of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

We have to see His ending on this, because that is going to be our ending too—to be in the Kingdom of God.

Hebrews 12:3-9 For consider him that endured such contradiction [hostility] of sinners against himself, lest you be wearied and faint [discouraged] in your minds. You have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin. And you have forgotten [speaking to the Hebrews] the exhortation which speaks unto you as unto children, My son, despise not you the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when you are rebuked of him [when you are corrected]. For whom the Lord loves he chastens [disciplines], and scourges every son whom he receives. If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chastens not [does not correct, from time to time]? But if you be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are you bastards [illegitimate], and not sons. Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them

A Christian's Greatest Trial by John O. Reid (1930-2016) (<http://www.cgg.org>)

reverence [respect]. Shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?

Our fathers gave us correction that, perhaps, was not always perfect. But God the Father gives perfect correction.

Hebrews 12:10 For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he [God the Father] for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.

And he goes on to say to pick up your tired arms, put your feet on the path where there are no stones or snares, and walk down the right path. God is watching over us. He is training us, and trying us, and teaching us that we might be partakers of all that He is. What does this mean? It means that He will share His nature with us, and we will be with Him in the Kingdom.

Turn with me back to the book of Daniel. This is the end result of what is going to take place. This is what we have to look forward to, after all of the wearing out of the saints.

Daniel 7:26-27 But the judgment [or, the court] shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion [meaning the fourth beast], to consume and to destroy it unto the end [forever and in completeness]. And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High [us], whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him [them].

In God's plan for us, He has given us many wonderful and good days—to accomplish things, to raise children, to enjoy the wonderful creation. We have all had many good times. He does not mean that this life should be without joy, for certainly it is joyful. It is full of good things, and we can be very thankful for that. But in His overall plan for this world, part of that plan was for "those who are called" to be stressed in resisting the wrong and doing the right. Thus, in God's sight, trials and the mentally wearing out of the saints are *necessary* for us. I hope that we really understand that.

But do we have all of the help that we are going to need? You bet we do.

Hebrews 4:14 Seeing then that we have a great high priest. . .

That is, One who has been here on this earth and suffered as we are suffering now, and even more so.

Hebrews 4:14-16 . . . that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession [conviction, or to our calling]. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

He understands our infirmities. He is sympathetic toward us in every way. And He, as our Elder Brother, longs for us to make it and be in the Kingdom of God. What greater help can you have than that? And, of course, you know what it says in Hebrews 13—where He says, "I will never, never, ever leave you."

So rather than giving into the pressure and quitting, when so much confusion is in the world, we should draw close to God (as James tells us, in James 4), knowing that He will never ever leave, or depart from us. He will work to perfect us, so that we might share in everything He has. If we do this, we (as all those who have gone before us) will receive our crown, our new name, and our position. And we will hear what we all long to hear: "**Well done, good and faithful servant.**"