

More Than One Road To Hell

Sermon #0915

Study by W. D. Frazee—February 16, 1962

In our last vesper service I studied with you the sifting of the church. We saw the church purified and arrayed in its beautiful robe, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners. We saw the church during the sifting as the winds of persecution and the winds of heresy unite to purge God's thrashing floor, and all the chaff is blown out and the wheat remains.

We also began to look at the conditions that caused certain ones to go out during the sifting. That is what I want to study with you.

None of us want to be sifted out. But if we know how some people are going to be sifted out, we can avoid those roads. There is more than one road to destruction. There is one road that leads up to the city.

"Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" 1 Corinthians 10:12.

"Some who are now ready to take up weapons of warfare will in times of real peril make it manifest that they have not built upon the solid rock; they will yield to temptation. Those who have had great light and precious privileges, but have not improved them, will, under one pretext or another, go out from us" *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, page 400.

What is a pretext? A reason a man gives for doing something. A friend of mine used to say that there are two reasons people have for doing something. The real reason and the reason they give.

Well, the reason they give is the pretext. And under one pretext or another people are going to go out from us. Many are going to believe the pretext. The basic problem in all disloyalty to God and His movement is, of course, the problem of the unconverted heart.

We were reading in *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, pages eighty and eighty-one, the terrible sifting time ahead. It speaks of the test over the mark of the beast. The time when men and women can't buy nor sell unless they are willing to receive that sign of apostasy. The mark of the beast will be urged upon us. And those who step by step yield to worldly demands and conform to worldly customs won't find it a hard matter to yield to the powers that be rather than to subject themselves to insult, derision, insult, imprisonment, and death.

We are going to look at some of those downward steps; some of the various ways which men arrive at last to the final jump from the church of God into Babylon. It is

suggested that men take that journey step by step, and they do it in yielding to worldly demands and conforming to worldly customs.

We will look first at education. Inspirations tells us:

"There is constant danger among our people that those who engage in labor in our schools and sanitariums will entertain the idea that they must get in line with the world, study the things which the world studies, and become familiar with the things that the world becomes familiar with. This is one of the greatest mistakes that could be made" *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, page 534.

There is constant danger. What does constant danger mean? All the time. There are some things where the question may be whether that still applies. But we know it applies because it says it is a constant danger. Where is the danger? Among our people.

We are all influenced by what we read and look at and listen to. If we look where the world is looking, and listen to what the world is listening to, we shall eventually come to many of their conclusions.

"Those who seek the education that the world esteems so highly, are gradually led further and further from the principles of truth until they become educated worldlings. At what a price have they gained their education!" *Ibid*, page 536.

It is possible for a man to start on a program of education which at the beginning he is a child of God, and ends up a child of the Devil. And at each point all he has to do is take how many steps? One step.

"And there are some who, having secured this worldly education, think that they can introduce it into our schools. But let me tell you that you must not take what the world calls the higher education and bring it into our schools and sanitariums and churches. I speak to you definitely. This must not be done" *Ibid*.

Well, let's not do it. What do you say? It is dangerous. It is one of those ways that leads downward.

During the shaking all who have thus been influenced, unless in some way their hearts have been brought back, will go out. That is indicated. The days of purification of the church are hastening on apace. Those who have rendered supreme homage to 'science falsely so called' will not be the leaders then. They did not keep pace with the light. In the last solemn work few great men will be engaged.

"God will work a work in our day that but few anticipate. He will raise up and exalt among us those who are taught rather by the unction of His Spirit than by the outward training of

scientific institutions. . . . God will manifest that He is not dependent on learned, self-important mortals" *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, page 82.

I come to something that may come closer to each one of us as we examine ourselves, for our text says that a man who thinks he is standing take heed lest he fall.

"Every selfish, covetous person will fall out by the way" *Early Writings*, page 269.

You don't have to go to a worldly university to learn that, friends. You can be selfish and never see the inside of a worldly school. Why? We were born that way. And accept a man be born again he can never enter into the kingdom of God.

There was a man in Jesus' inner circle who fell out because he was selfish and covetous.

"Like Judas, who sold his Lord, they will sell good principles and a noble, generous disposition for a little of earth's gain. All such will be sifted out from God's people" *Ibid.*

That's what we are studying. We are studying the sifting; how to get out of God's movement. And one way is simply through being selfish and covetous. To be selfish means I want my own way. To be covetous means I want something that somebody else has. And all such are going to be sifted out.

Is there any hope for me if I am selfish? Yes, there is hope now, but I will have to get the selfishness sifted out of me or else it will sift me out of the church. One or the other. All selfishness is going to be sifted out. If I cling to selfishness I will be sifted out. But if I am willing to let the grace of God sift me, thank God there is hope.

We are told that continual giving starves covetousness to death. The Devil doesn't like that, but Jesus does. He so loved that He gave Himself. The Father so loved that He gave the Son. And as we unite with Jesus in unselfish ministry for others, and unselfish giving for God's work to help the poor and needy, it will help to sift out the covetousness.

Related to selfishness and covetousness is an idol that looks so sweet that many people think it will never do much harm. It is a darling, or so it is thought to be. Do you know what it is? It is the love of ease. I found something about it:

"I know that many think far too favorably of the present time. These ease-loving souls will be engulfed in the general ruin" *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, page 80.

There are many people who don't want to do anything bad. They just don't want to do anything serious. I saw a sign on a church bulletin board one day. It said there were two classes of people. Those who will do anything, and those who will not do anything. I am studying with you various roads to hell. One of them is just being good but good for nothing. Ease-loving, avoiding responsibility.

They are represented in Matthew chapter twenty-five by the man in the parable of the talents. The master had given one man five talents and another man two, and he gave one little man one talent. What did he do with it? He put it in the earth. When the master came back the servant thought he had played safe. Did the master commend him? No. He was not willing to exert himself to go beyond what had been imparted to him. Oh, I pray that God will deliver us from the ease-loving spirit that dodges and evades responsibility.

Let me warn you about an alias under which that masquerades. Here is a man named John Smith. He doesn't want to be known, so he says his name is Harry Jones. This love of ease and freedom from responsibility masquerades under an alias. It is that a man says, I am so conscientious that I wouldn't want to do anything unless I could do it the very best. The only way I can do anything very good is to have practically nothing to do. So I can't accept very much responsibility, because if I did I wouldn't have time to do it in my perfectionist way.

That is one of the Devil's subtle deceptions. When men and women get to the judgment, some of them are going to be surprised at how sanctimonious was the guise the enemy led them away.

I know it is possible to err on the other side. There was never a road but what there is a ditch on both sides of it. The Devil takes advantage of that. And nothing I can say to souls that need help on this point will help them at all if they are so terribly afraid of the ditch on the other side.

You can readily see that if this is the ditch I am afraid of, and back away from it, pretty soon I am going to fall into the ditch on the other side.

"The life of selfish ease and freedom from responsibility is the idol of others. These are Satan's snares, set for unwary feet. But these slavish bands must be broken; . . . God's watchmen will not cry, 'Peace, peace' when God has not spoken peace"
Ibid, page 83.

They are traps set for unwary feet. So I am not going to cry "peace" to people who desire to be good but are largely good for nothing. My soul longs that God will arouse every lackadaisical party, ease-loving soul, with the spirit to do more and more and more.

I know there are people who try to do too much. I understand that. There are some people who eat too much. But the answer is not for us to quit eating or eat only an ounce a day. And because some people undertake too much is no reason why people should take any one of the talents God has given and wrap them in a napkin and put them on the shelf.

Meet God in the secret place of prayer. You are not answerable to me. You are answerable to the One who gave you those talents.

Sometimes there is pride wrapped up in this. People wouldn't want to fail. God may let you fail to take pride out of your heart.

Moody and Sankey had been invited to London. They arranged a theater where the royal family of England had a box. There were lords and ladies from all over the country.

Sankey led out in the song service. He was a well educated and cultured. Moody had not had much education or culture. He had been a shoe clerk before he was converted. He had started working for souls individually. He said he wasn't a preacher. He was just trying to win souls. But here he was with hundreds and thousands of people before him.

When Moody stood up and started to read his text he fumbled with it. He couldn't get through it. He started to read again and again missed it. Sankey tried to help him. He tried again and again and couldn't get through reading the text. He broke down and wept.

He said, Oh Lord, You can help a poor ignorant man like me to say something to these people that will help them. With that he began to talk to them. Within twenty minutes the Spirit of God was at work all over that vast audience. The king and queen of England were weeping in their box.

The human vessel had been broken, and the light shone out. And if we can get away from our little ideas of how things must be done, and be willing to venture out with God in a place where unless God works we are stopped, God is willing and ready to do great things. God works no miracles for the soul who hugs the shore and loves the life of ease and freedom from responsibility. All such will eventually be sifted out. God help us to be warned in time.

As I look over the Bible records, one of the men who makes me sorry as I read his life's story is Esau. Esau's problem was with Esau.

"Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright" Hebrews 12:16.

Where was Esau's attention focused? Right down below the ribs. That is where a lot of people have their attention today. His god was appetite. It is interesting how the Bible states it. For one morsel of meat he sold his birthright.

As far as I know, what Jacob was cooking was all right. But poor Esau had an appetite he couldn't control, so he sold out for a little bit of food.

Do you think there are going to be any people like Esau who will be sifted out in the closing time? Oh, yes. I will read you something challenging on that:

"The controlling power of appetite will prove the ruin of thousands, when, if they had conquered on this point, they would have had the moral power to gain the victory over every other temptation of Satan. But those who are slaves to appetite will fail in perfecting Christian character" *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, page 491.

The people who receive the latter rain and give the loud cry will be those who have gotten the victory over pride, selfishness, love of the world, and every word and action. They will have control over appetite. It doesn't mean they will be aesthetic. They will not just eat one or two things and starve themselves. No. They will be good, normal, sensible, balanced people with appetite under control. It is a wonderful thing to say to your stomach no or yes as reason sanctified by the Holy Spirit may indicate.

Speaking specifically as how this affects loyalty to God in His church, I read:

"Health reform is to do among our people a work which is not yet done. Many who are now only half converted on the question of meat eating will go from God's people to walk no more with them" *Counsels on Health*, page 575.

They are sifted out. And the particular way they got out was that they were only half converted on the question of health reform. Personally I very seldom say anything on the question of meat eating. I hardly ever mention it for several reasons. But inspiration mentions it here, and definitely links it with the sifting that is approaching. I say, if there are any of us who still hunger for the flesh pots of Egypt, let's ask God to sanctify our appetites. And remember, He does it not while we indulge them, but while we deny them. And praise God, we can come to the place where we like what God likes. When we get to the King's table and sit down, we won't look over that long table and say, I can't find a thing to eat here. I wonder if there is a restaurant around town where I can get something to eat.

Thank God, we can have our appetites converted right here in this world.

Anything that a man has to have can be his god, even if it is something good. What was it that Esau sold his birthright for? Pottage. Lintels. Good food. Rich in iron. Very nutritious. Good food can be a god.

Suppose appetite is my god. Suppose that is one of the ways Satan has been leading me. Is there hope for me? Can I get the victory? Oh, yes. Thank the Lord, there is hope for me. My Lord went into the desert and spent forty days in a fast to break appetite. He hasn't asked me to fast forty days. But if Jesus was willing to endure that long fast to break the hold of appetite upon the human family, don't you think He will enable me to do a battle on my own account? Oh, yes. And what a joy it is to be victorious. What a joy it is to have appetite under control.

But there is something more dangerous about the tongue than what it wants to take in. James tells us that if a man can control his tongue he is what kind of a man?

"If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body" James 3:2.

What is James talking about? What is coming in the mouth? No, what is coming out.

When Jeremiah was a prophet in Judea some of his enemies said to one another, Come let us smite him with the tongue. You can disarm a man by taking his sword or gun away, but how are you going to get rid of that tongue which pierces?

When Isaiah caught a view of the Lord, he said:

"Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts" Isaiah 6:5.

Was there hope for him? One of the angels came and took a live coal from off the altar and put it right on his tongue. Do you suppose that hurt? There are some cancers that are burnt away. Are you and I willing to have this radical treatment applied to cure us of faultfinding, accusing, and criticism?

The people who may be in control of their appetites and not be interested in the world at all can be especially prone to the temptation to criticize. Do you remember the pharisee in the temple? What were the opening words to his prayer? Lord, I thank Thee that I am not as other men. He went on and listed all the things he didn't do. He saw the publican over there, and said, Lord, I am so glad I am not like him. He was using his tongue to find fault and criticize even in prayer. It shows it was a fixed habit with him.

Did that pharisee go down to his house justified? Oh, no. But the publican did because he cried to God, Be merciful to me, a sinner. In this time of all times we need to be delivered from this spirit of criticism.

I told about an alias under which one temptation of Satan masquerades. This trait of faultfinding and criticism has a very interesting alias. Do you know what it is? It is the burden to reform the church. It is a burden to give the straight testimony. It is a terrible thing to borrow a crooked tool to give the straight testimony, and the accusing tongue is a crooked tool. God is not in the business of using it.

"But men are to be condemned who start out with a proclamation of wonderful light, and yet draw away from the agents whom God is leading. This was the way in which Korah, Dathan, and Abiram did, and their action is recorded as a warning to all others. We are not to do as they have done—accuse and condemn those upon whom God has laid the burden of the work" *Testimonies to Ministers*, page 56.

If we would follow that simple advice it would save a lot of time for the servants of God. We are not to accuse and condemn those upon whom God has laid the burden of the work.

Do we believe this is God's church? Do we believe this is God's movement? Then how we should view with suspicion any who come with what they call light. New light, old light, any kind of light that is mixed with accusing and condemning those upon whom God has laid the burden of the work. No matter what the alias. No matter how they masquerade. No matter how the sheep's clothing of longing for the latter rain and the loud cry is pulled clear over the body of the wolf which will tare and divide the flock. We need not be misled, my friends, because with all the sheep's clothing the growl of the wolf will occasionally be heard. The accusing and condemning of God's church and God's leaders is bound to come out somewhere along the line. The dragon cannot forever masquerade as a lamb.

This leads me to another way in which many are going to be sifted out. It is closely related to criticism and faultfinding. It is the spirit of pulling away from the church and its divinely appointed leadership. I will read a statement that ought to impress each one of us very much:

"The world is filled with strife for the supremacy. The spirit of pulling away from fellow laborers, the spirit of disorganization, is in the very air we breath. By some all efforts to establish order are regarded as dangerous—as a restriction of personal liberty, and hence to be feared as popery" *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, page 257.

We need not to be mislead.

Over two weeks ago a doctor was invited to a certain meeting. He said to the people who asked him, "If I go to that meeting, will it help me to feel more united with God's people and God's church?"

The man who answered said, "To be honest with you, if you stay long enough you will hear something of criticism of the leaders."

The doctor said, "That's all I wanted to know. I don't need to go."

"And He spake a parable unto them, Can the blind lead the blind? shall they not both fall into the ditch" Luke 6:39.

If you are following somebody else, you might land where? In the ditch. And if you are following somebody else, the only question is, which ditch did you land in?

Let us come to the focal point of this study. As you look over these various way of being sifted out, do you see that some are on one side and some are on the other side of the road to heaven? Do you see that some are on the side of worldliness and conformity, drifting away from God's standards, and some are on the side of pharisaical conformity to the standards of reform, but have the spirit of criticism of self-righteousness? Wouldn't it be too bad to be so loyal to the church that we follow a multitude to do evil and go along with worldly trends and finally loose out when the mark of the beast is enforced? Wouldn't it be too bad in the name of championing reform and standing for standards to become so pharisaical that we pull away from our brothers and sisters who may not see some detail as we see it, and finally find ourselves outside the church of God? I ask you, do you think the Devil cares which ditch we fall into?

If you follow somebody, and follow his worldly trends, you will land in the ditch. You may talk of loyalty to the church. You may say I will be loyal to the church no matter what. But if you are following someone in going against the testimonies of the Spirit of God eventually you will find yourself disloyal to the standards and disloyal to the very church you say you are loyal to. You may claim to be so loyal to the standards that it leads you to criticize and accuse others in the church, and to doubt the sincerity of church leadership. Believe me, it is the snare of the Devil. And if you follow that road, eventually you will not only give up loyalty to the church, you will give up loyalty to those very standards and reforms you thought were so very important that you used as a basis for criticizing.

There is only one thing that is going to take us through. Jesus says we are lukewarm, neither cold nor hot. We try to straddle things. Not too much this way and not too much the other way. But He says because you are lukewarm He will spew you out of His mouth.

I don't want to be spewed out. I don't want to go out the worldly road, and I don't want to go out the critical road. I don't want to go out the way of Esau, and I don't want to go out the way of the Pharisee. Do you?

What is the answer?

"I counsel thee to buy of Me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see. Revelation 3:18.

You know what that gold is, don't you? Faith and love. If we love Jesus enough we will cling to His standards no matter who goes against them. But we will do it in love. We will love the church so much that we won't lift our voices in accusation and criticism while we try to live out God's standards. Love is the answer to this whole thing. Love enough to do what God says, and while we are doing it, not criticize others.

Thoughtful men of our church leaders have pointed out these things to us. I want to read something that Elder J. L. McElhany, for many years our General Conference president said in 1941:

"I believe, my friends, that the hour has come when the call should sound out to the church to come up to a newer and higher plain of living. It is our privilege to live on an even higher level than is required by the standards set forth by the church" *Review and Herald*, June, 1941.

In our personal lives we ought to be going higher than that. Isn't that reasonable? I ask you, if an individual in his study of the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy lives out what God requires in His word, even though the church doesn't require it, does that make him disloyal to the church? Why no. Let no man fool you on that point.

"From time to time people write the editors of the Review enquiring what they call the official position of the church on such things as wedding rings, certain styles of dress, the use of flesh foods and certain beverages, engaging in particular types of employment or other activities on the Sabbath, attendance of the motion picture theater, hunting and fishing for sport, and listening to certain kinds of music or watching certain types of TV programs.

"God hasn't seen fit to set up in His church rules that cover every detail of life. The reason is that you and I need to develop character. We need to choose the more excellent way because it is the more excellent way. Beyond the minimum requirements there is infinite opportunity for the perfection of a character in harmony with His infinite purpose for us. God will impress his heart with points on which he can improve, and on which he can measure up more perfectly to the high ideals of

heaven. He will not be content with the minimum requirements set forth in the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy, but will, with gladness of heart, endeavor to grow each day in grace and in the knowledge of heavenly things" *Review and Herald*, January, 1962.

We need in the secret place of prayer, down on our knees, to let God impress us with the next step He wants us to take. And the closing paragraph in this article urges us to set a quiet example of Christian living that others will want to follow, and to be patient when some of our brethren may seem to be slow to understand or appreciate some of the things we have learned to understand and appreciate even as God is patient with us.

Let's go do it. And in doing it, let us understand that we are at one and at the same time loyal to God and loyal to His church. We need never be disloyal to either one. With one hand we must cling to what the Lord has said through His word and Spirit of Prophecy, and with the other cling to His organized church which He has placed here in this world to carry on His work.

Our Father in heaven, we thank Thee that Thou hast warned us concerning the approaching sifting time. We are so glad as we accept the counsel of the True Witness, and buy the gold of love, that we shall be kept from every snare of the enemy; from the worldliness on one side and criticism on the other. Oh, we pray that Thou will help us to be balanced Christians, to keep out of the ditch on either side of the road. Keep us from the subtle deceptions of the enemy. Make us glad as we look to Calvary that God has made it possible for everyone to be fully victorious. We accept that love, that life in Jesus' name, Amen.

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W.D. Frazee Sermons
PO Box 129, Wildwood, GA 30757
1-800-WDF-1840 / 706-820-9755
www.WDFsermons.org
support@WDFsermons.org