

Man's Ifs and God's Ifs

Sermon #0928

Study by W.D. Frazee—Date not listed on tape

Please turn to the 11th chapter of John. Our Savior is the only One in all the Bible, that had four different men write His life and sayings. The Holy Spirit wants us to study this life, and what Jesus said, more than any other thing in all the world. So we do well to spend some time each day, mediating, on the wonderful life of Jesus. This 11th chapter of John, is one of the outstanding experiences. There are two verses in this 11th of John, that I would like to study with you tonight. The 21st verse and the 40th verse. If you will notice, you will see a little word that is in each of these verses.

You will remember the story of the 11th of John, Lazarus was sick. He lived in Bethany, with his two sisters, Martha and Mary. Jesus was often in that home. He loved to go there, it was a refuge. And now with Jesus far away and Lazarus sick, the sisters thought, “oh, if only Jesus were here.”

And so they sent Him a message. In those days they didn't have mail service or telegrams, of course, but a messenger took the word, and finally arrived where Jesus was. And said, “Martha and Mary hath sent to tell you, the one you love is sick.” And they knew that He would understand, and they were sure, He would come right away, and heal Him. But Jesus, as you will remember, decided instead, to tarry where He was. He had a reason, but nobody understood the reason. And finally the time came when He said to His disciples. “Well we will go now, we will go back to Jerusalem.” And so they arrived, the 20th verse.

“Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met Him: but Mary sat still in the house. Then said Martha unto Jesus, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died” John 11:20-21.

What do you think? Was Martha correct? Yes, she was correct. In fact, that is the very reason Jesus didn't come. For when He got the message, He said to His disciples,

“...This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby” John 11:4.

That's the fourth verse.

So Martha was very correct in what she said to Jesus. “Lord, if thou hadst been here my brother had not died.” You see the sisters, Martha and Mary, had figured out exactly what Jesus should do, and exactly what He would do. To them, it was all very clear. They would send the messenger, Jesus would hear, and He would come

at once. Lay His hands on the sick brother, or speak the word, and the sickness would depart, and everybody would be happy. But nothing happened the way they planned. The messenger came back and said, "I delivered the message, but the Master didn't seem in any mood to start." And so, the hours went by, and the sick man got worse and finally died, and they buried him. And four days went by, and then Jesus appeared. And the very first thing that met the Master's ears, were those words, "Lord, if thou hadst been here my brother had not died." Not rebuke, sorrow, disappointment. And you can see, running through it, the thought. Why didn't you come before? Now you go on down the chapter, and you find after some conversation with Martha, that Mary is called from the house. 32nd verse. She comes now, and meets Jesus. Listen, the first words that fall from Mary.

"Then when Mary was come where Jesus was, and saw him, she fell down at his feet, saying unto him, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died" John 11:32.

Had she heard Martha's say the words to Jesus? Oh, no, she was in the house, Martha was out on the road. But the identical words fell from her lips. I conclude that they must have said those words to each other, a hundred times, during those four days. That must have been the thing that went over, and over, and over, in their minds. "Oh, if the Master had only been here our brother wouldn't have died." You notice that little word with two letters? What is it? "If."

Now let's hear Jesus here, it is down in the 40th verse. After He talked with Martha and with Mary, He asked to be taken to the grave. 34th verse they said. "Come and see." "Jesus wept." He stood there by that tomb with great tears running down His face, in sympathy with human woe. And in a deeper grief, for the sins and rebellion of a people, that would soon seek to kill the very one, that He was about to call from the grave, and stain their hands with the Son of God. All of this rolled upon His heart, a heavy weight, and He wept, He wept.

This grave was a cave and a stone lay upon it. Jesus said (39th verse) "Take thee away the stone." Martha objected, that he had been dead four days, it wouldn't smell good, better not.

"Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldst believe, thou shouldst see the glory of God"?
John 11:40.

Martha, you have been thinking, what could have happened, if I had only been here. Oh, if you will believe, you will see something more wonderful, than the healing of a sick man. You will see the resurrection of a dead man. Instead of your plans being carried out, My plans will be carried out. But that depends on your faith your expression of faith, your action of faith. If thou wouldst believe, you will see the glory of God.

My dear friends, if there is any time, when faith is needed and faith is difficult? It is when our plans, our good plans, our wonderful plans, have all been swept aside, and failed. This is the position that Martha and Mary were in that day. Everything that

they had hoped for, didn't happen. But Jesus said, something wonderful will happen, if you will just believe. Believe in the One that failed us, when we sent Him a message? Yes. Believe in the One that didn't come, when He might have come, and healed our brother? Yes. If, thou wouldst believe, thou shouldst see the glory of God.

Why am I studying this with you? Because, my friends, ahead of us is a time, when the things we have planned, will fail. But God's plan, if we believe, we will succeed. In *Testimonies to Ministers*, 300, I read.

“Let me tell you that the Lord will work in this last work in a manner very much out of the common order of things, and in a way that will be contrary to any human planning”
Testimonies to Ministers, page 300.

A way that will be contrary to what? Any human planning. Committees have their place, planning has its place, but the work of the loud cry, is going to go above and beyond, any human planning. This is not to say, it is wrong to plan. There was nothing wrong with Martha and Mary's saying, “Our brother is sick and he is not getting better, we had better send the Master a message, and have Him come.” That was all alright, wasn't it? There was nothing wrong about their human longing, for the presence of the Life Giver. And certainly their disappointment was very human. My point is, friends, God did not see fit to answer their expectations, He did exceeding abundantly, above all they could have asked or thought. Did He not? Oh, that our hearts may learn now, to trust in that kind of God. We will need that kind of faith in the issues of the future, the very near future.

“He (Lord) will work in the last work in a manner very much out of the common order of things, and in a way that will be contrary to any human planning” *Testimonies to Ministers*, page 300.

The next sentence says

“There will be those among us who will always want to control the work of God, to dictate even what movements shall be made when the work goes forward under the direction of the angel who joins the third angel in the message to be given to the world. God will use ways and means by which it will be seen that He is taking the reins in His own hands. The workers will be surprised by the simple means that He will use to bring about and perfect His work of righteousness” *Testimonies to Ministers*, page 300.

How do you get ready for a surprise? How do you prepare for a disappointment? You cannot, if to prepare means, to know what is going to happen, so you know what to do. But if to prepare means, to trust the hand that never lets go, and the heart that never quits loving, then my friends, you and I can prepare, now. Let's do it, what do

you say? Another wonderful statement. Volume 9 page 96. Speaking again of this last movement, just ahead, the loud cry time.

“There will be a series of events revealing that God is master of the situation” *Testimonies* Volume 9, page 96.

He is never taken by surprise, we are, but He isn't.

“...Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God? John 11:40.

“...I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory. And he cried mightily, with a strong voice, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen,...Come out of her, my people,... Revelation 18:1, 2, 4.

The people who give that message will be a people who believe therefore they see and share and reveal the glory of God. They will be those who have been trained in the school of trial and disappointment. For we just read, that there is going to be a series of events, showing that God is Master of the situation, that He will use ways, contrary to any human planning. That means, human minds are going to be taken by surprise. Human plans, are in some cases, going to be laid aside. Human desires, disappointed, and therefore, the people that finish this work, will have to be those who can plow right through those disappointments, and say, “what we planned is gone, but what He has planned, cannot fail.”

That tomb, that seemed to Martha and Mary, the end of their hope, was the very place that God saw fit, to make the greatest demonstration, in the ministry of Jesus. Wasn't it? Oh, yes.

Disappointment, His appointment. Disappointment, His appointment. Change one letter, then I see, that the thwarting of my purpose, is God's better choice for me. His appointment, must be blessing, though it may come in disguise, for the end, from the beginning, open to His wisdom, lies. You see, what the poet is talking about here, don't you? You take disappointment, and write it out, and cross out the “D” and put an “H”, and what have you got? Instead of disappointment, it is His appointment. Whose appointment? Disappointment, His appointment. Who? The Lord who loves me best, understands and knows me fully, who my faith and love would test. For like loving earthly parents, He rejoices when He knows, that His child accepts unquestioned, all that from His wisdom flows.

My dear friends, the Master has taught me some things, in recent months, about disappointment. And I thank God, that I know by faith, that every disappointment, is His appointment. It is alright, it is alright. Disappointment, His appointment. Lord, I take it then, as such, like the clay in hands of the potter, yielding wholly to Thy touch, all my life plans, in Thy molding, not one single choice, be mine. Let me answer unrepining, Father, not my will, but Thine.

You know, it is one thing to write poems about it, and read poems about it. It is another thing to experience it, and know that the anchor holds, isn't it, friends? Well I thank God, even though Martha and Mary were human enough to be disappointed, and wonder why the Master hadn't done what they had planned for Him, thank God, they were also loving and responsive enough, to have the faith that enabled Jesus to do, what He planned to do. Aren't you thankful? That encourages me, weak heart, God has something for you. Your blasted hopes, are not the end. Your disappointments, are not the end. If you will believe, you will see the glory of God.

Turn over to Mark 9. I want you to see these two "ifs" again. Man's "if" and God's "if." Mark 9:22-23. The scene is at the foot of the mountain of transfiguration. Jesus and the three have come down, they find the nine vainly seeking to cast out a devil from a sick boy. They have been challenged, they failed. The multitude come running to Jesus, He finds the father, and draws from him, the story of the poor boy's condition. And finally, the father bursts out, in a wail of agony, saying.

"...If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth" Mark 9:23.

What is that word? If, If. Like Martha's if, like Martha's if. Now don't miss this, friends. There was a difference, between this man and Martha. Martha hadn't questioned Jesus' power, she knew that if the Master was there, everything would have been alright. She questioned, (shall I say) His judgement. But this man, is questioning, what? Jesus' power. Which one, do you question? His wisdom, or His power? His ability to do things, or His judgment. There is many a person that says, "oh, I know God could do, but why doesn't He do it." That's Martha. But there are others who think, "oh, even God couldn't handle this." And so, the poor father is crying out. If you can do anything for us, have compassion on us, and help us. He didn't say Jesus couldn't do it, he just didn't know, whether He could, or not.

Now you know, there are people that think that God ought to step right into a challenge like that, and prove what? Prove He can do it. The remnant are going to be challenged to work miracles, to prove this. They are going to have to follow the example of their Lord. God doesn't work a miracle, to prove something, my friends, prove His power. No, No. God works a miracle, in answer to faith. And so, to that man, that says, "if thou canst do anything, have compassion on us and help us." Jesus immediately replies, the 23rd verse what?

"...If thou canst believe..." Mark 9:23.

Same thing He told Martha.

"...If thou canst believe all things are possible to him that believeth" Mark 9:23.

And I am greatly cheered, as I find that something happened, right away. That man took his will, out of neutral, or reverse, and he put it in forward. He cried out, and said with tears, "Lord I believe, help thou my unbelief." Did he get help, did the boy get healed? My dear friends, sometimes it isn't just you, that is going to suffer for lack of your faith, some dear one, may have to wait until you come to the point of

simple belief, in the promise of God. Oh, do what that man did, instead of challenging God, and saying, "Lord if you are there, do something." "Lord if You are there, do something, Lord if You love me, do something" Put that "if" all aside. Say, "Lord, I know You are there, do what You will, when You will, and how You will. Lord, I know You love me, do You what You will, when You will, and how You will." This opens the way, to see the glory of God.

You know, we learn these lessons, in the little experiences of life, and we either faint and fail, or gloriously succeed, in the great crisis of life, depending on whether we have learned, or haven't learned. You, dear students, that have recently come on this campus, of this new quarter. When you came, you had some disappointments, you won't have any here, will you? You have come to the promised land, where the palm branches wave, and the figs and pomegranates grow, and the grape branches, the grape bunches, are so big, that it takes two men to carry it. Or have you? Have we arrived there yet? Are we still on the way, from Egypt to Canaan? Are there disappointments in the desert? Why look at those experiences, that were all written for our admonition, and tell me. Were they alarmed and disappointed, when the cloud led them in a round about way, down to the red sea, and they looked at nothing but water there? Were they? But did the Lord finally get them through? How many of them? Everyone. You know what they did, after they got out on dry land? I say, out on dry land, they went across on dry land, but after they got out of the waterbed. When they got up on the bluff and looked back, and the water had rolled over their enemies, and they were all dead. Do you know what they did? They sang, they did just what the children did, a while ago, they sang. Could they have been singing all the way across? Why, of course. Thank God, they had enough faith to march across, and they had enough gratitude to sing, when they got across.

Wouldn't it have been wonderful, if their faith had reached, to praising God, through the red sea? Wouldn't it have been still more wonderful, if they had started singing, before the red sea ever opened? Wouldn't it? There are going to be some people soon, that are going to sing, in the midst of the greatest trials of history.

"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof" Psalm 46:1-3.

That is our battle song, at Armageddon, we must learn it now. So dear folks, on the road to Canaan, remember, there is one trial after the other one, disappointment after the other. They got through the red sea, but soon they ran out of water. God took care of that. They ran out of food. God took care of that. Read the whole story, and you will find one disappointment after the other. And in each case, God handled the problem, in a way contrary, to any human planning. Is that what I read here, about the coming loud cry? Who, but God, would have found a way through the red sea, instead of around it? Who, but God, would have rained manna from heaven, as the way to solve the problem of food? Who but God, would have sent Moses to a

rock, the hardest thing in that dreary desert, and said, “there, you will get some water”?

Dear friends, again I say, it may not be wrong, it may be right for us to lay some plans, but the One who knows, has suggested, that every morning, you and I, should say, “Lord, I lay my plans at Thy feet, to be carried out or laid aside, as Thy providence shall indicate.” Oh, dear students, dear visitors, dear staff, everybody, let’s accept it, what do you say? If thou wilt believe, thou wilt see the glory of God. If you will let your plans be thrown aside, God’s plan will be carried out.

Ah, but somebody says, “I have tried that, and I don’t see it.” (end of side one, but side two of tape does not repeat this sentence so there might be something missing)

You will find it in John 13, verse 7. Somebody here tonight, this is for you. John 13:7. And with it, Ministry of Healing, 474.

“Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter” John 13:7.

“In the future life the mysteries that here have annoyed and disappointed us will be made plain. We shall see that our seemingly unanswered prayers and disappointed hopes have been among our greatest blessing” *Ministry of Healing*, page 474.

Now I want to hear from you. My ears long to hear your word of faith. Let’s just keep it short, that many of you may have opportunity to respond. And if we can have two or three standing in different parts of the chapel, the brethren will bring you the traveling mike, and that way, all will be able to hear, here in the chapel and up at the sanitarium. And friends, tonight, let your words be words of faith, words of expression of your belief in the promises of God. It will bring joy to the Master and joy to others.

[A lady from the congregation] I want my will to be God’s will. Thank you.

[Elder Frazee] Amen.

[A lady] I thank the Lord for all of my plans that have been disappointed and for the much better plan that He put out for my life. I have no reason not to pray and yet sometimes I still don’t. We have a schedule at the San and sometimes I seem to think that it is my business to see that we have people that fill it out. I am thankful to have a part in the Lord’s work and I know that He will teach me, and I want to learn to leave the burdens with Him and to just do the things He gives me to do.

[Another lady] You know I want to thank God for the blessings to have time... Then I think my left side being healed. I became a Seventh-day Adventist when I came from Brazil for school to this country about 12 years ago. I finished school and then learned about Wildwood and then here I came. When I had been here visiting Wildwood, I wanted to learn what I have seen here. I only spent six months at this

institution. And I expect God will keep on leading me and also to help Wildwood to go on the strait and narrow the true way to serve Him and to help others.

[Elder Frazee] Amen.

(Another lady) I am thankful for what the Lord has helped me experience here and I am also thankful for the little bit I have been able to help others. I know it is a wonderful experience and I ask your prayers that I may go and teach Jesus to others.

[Elder Frazee] Thank the Lord.

[A man from the congregation] God's will is worth our waiting for. It is my choice to learn His appointments and all the disappointments that He brings to me.

[Elder Frazee] Thank God.

[Another man] Some years back I copied a little statement into my Bible and then transferred it to another Bible because I enjoyed it so much, on this very point. It says, "Difficulties are God's errands and we should esteem it a proof of God's confidence when we are sent upon them." I want to be a faithful errand boy.

[Elder Frazee] Good.

[A lady] I always did say to myself that it seemed like I had an awful lot of disappointments, little plans that I wanted to happen, didn't happen. But every time I get on the other side of it I can look back and see where the Lord's providence is leading. He had something somewhat better in store for me. And I am so thankful for these experiences and I know that the Lord has something in store for me because of all this. Because if He didn't He wouldn't let the Devil bother me so much, and I am thankful for this.

[Elder Frazee] Amen. Alright Elder BreedLove.

[Elder Breedlove] Sometimes I feel like I have to plan most of my life out. Since I have come to Wildwood I have come to realize that God has something to do with it also. And I have heard studies and talks where they emphasize you have to do your part before God will do His part. Sometimes they use the quotation which for some people is good. Most of the time God will move a mountain if necessary but most of the time you will have to move the mountain with a bulldozer. And sometimes I want to move some problems in my own life with my own bulldozer and actually God should move them for me.

[Elder Frazee] What was it that Martha was objecting to there at the tomb? The removal of the stone. Did Jesus remove the stone? No. Why didn't He? That was something that men could do, is that right? What human power can do, Divine power is not summoned to do. But that act of removing the stone was an act of what? Faith, obedience to what Jesus said. And it opened the way for His mighty miracle. No, there is a place for human activity. But it is in cooperation with the divine will and in expectation of the divine miracle. Sister Butler.

[Sister Butler] I have been reading just enough tonight. I thank the Lord for it. I am so thankful that His promises are something that we can trust in. It isn't easy to talk about it but when you find yourself in a situation where you really need to live by it, it is just a little different. I am just thankful for the experiences of a year ago that helped me grasp some of these promises, and again this year. I am thankful that He brings us more experiences that we can trust in Him more deeply than ever before. It is my determination to believe Him as Martha and Mary finally did and as the other man did, and I know He will do wonderful things for the glory of His name.

[Elder Frazee] I believe it sister and I believe that as you believe you will see the glory of God. You will see the glory of God.

[A man] I would like to share with you something that has been a great comfort to me. A statement in Mount of Blessing found on page 61. It says, "That which you look upon as disaster is the door to highest benefits." Several times recently I have had tests come to me in which I had to trust and when I thought of this precious promise it eased my mind and my heart and I looked for the blessing and I found the blessing. And God delivered me. I want to learn this lesson well that in all things that come to me I will recognize it as the Lord's hand and that nothing comes to me except by His permission.

[Elder Frazee] Amen.

[A lady] You know I often think of several situations where all our lives have been where God can use us. And as I look back on it I just see how much better it is, and I want to claim the promise to come close to God so that even while I am in the midst of these trying experiences, I can share in the blessings of these experiences.

[Elder Frazee] Good. You got the letter.

(Man talks) We are told that Jesus made no plans for himself but His father unfolded His plans to Him from day to day. It is my desire that this will be the experience of my life.

[Elder Frazee] Good.

[A lady] Several times I have had the blessing of praying that the Lord would work things out in my life and that I would be happy with what He had chosen for me and it really works better that way. I find out that I am really happy when I ask the Lord to bless the things that happen. And when I try to see what I think should be done I surrender to Him.

[Elder Frazee] Right.

[A lady] I am thankful for the message tonight. I believe that submission to the Lord's will is the happy way, the beautiful way. It does get better and better each day. It is my determination to apply myself fully to it.

[Elder Frazee] Good.

[Lady speaks] I am so glad you spoke on this tonight because just as I was coming over here it just seemed to me like I had run into a lot of blind alleyways. But it was my own fault, but it didn't make it any harder to see my way out of it. And now that I think of what you said tonight it seems like both the problems are still there that I was thinking, and I am so glad you spoke on it.

[Elder Frazee] Good. I am glad you got the blessing.

[A man] I have received many blessing this week from being able to attend class here at Wildwood for which I am very thankful for. I know that the Lord has many more blessings for me, lessons for me to learn. We have had the memory verse, Romans 8:28, this is hard for me but I want to get to the point that I can accept this in my heart and believe everything works for good, regardless of what it is. I am thankful for this study tonight.

[Elder Frazee] Brother, may I help you with something? Just hold this a minute (presumably microphone) I want to ask you something. When would you like to come to that point where you really believe that? (Answer, "now") Will you? Fine. If you believe you what? See the glory of God. Oh, this is what cheers my heart friends. It isn't what Santa Claus is going to bring us come Christmas. It is what Jesus is bringing us tonight, tonight, tonight, if we believe we will what? See the glory of God.

[A lady] The Lord of power is with us the God of Jacob is our refuge. This is real help to me and I am so thankful that God has given us promises in the Bible and that we can believe that He is able to help us and that He will help us.

[Elder Frazee] Thank the Lord.

[A man] The power that multiplied fruit there on the 5,000 or over 10,000 perhaps were fed. The same power supplied our produce this year. I believe that will all my heart.

[A lady] When Jesus made wine from the water that was a miracle wasn't it? Because the water the Lord turned into the grapejuice in the grape over a period of weeks. I heard it.

[A man cuts in] Terrible crime with Bathsheba but through his repentance God allowed their son to become David's successor as king of Israel and there are many multiple illustrations like this that help us to know that God's plans can work out in spite of all of our failures.

[Another man] I don't know of anyone that had any more disappointments than Joseph. And as he passed his father's tent I am sure that was one of the most disappointing things in his life. When he told his brothers he said, "be not grieved or angered with yourselves that ye sold me hither for God did send me before you to preserve life." And if we would allow ourselves to be sent where God sends us He will send us places where we might help save lives.

[Elder Frazee] Good.

[A man] Three months ago friends I had big plans for myself. I was just out of school. You know this summer through a number of providences the Lord was rescued me at Wildwood and I am thankful that He has. Because I see that He has bigger plans than any of the ones that I had. I don't know what they are but I have faith that He will show them to me. He will show me each day the step I need to take.

[Elder Frazee] God bless you.

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