

Hardest Word to Pronounce

Sermon #0907

Study given by W. D. Frazee—January 12, 1962

In our last vesper service we studied about the research of the papacy. We looked at the 13th chapter of Revelation and found the picture of the leopard beast with the seven heads and ten horns to whom the dragon gives his power, seat, and great authority. We found that after a long rein one of his heads is given a deadly wound, the deadly wound is healed, and all the world wondered after the beast.

"And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" Revelation 13:8.

I studied with you why so many are going to follow the lead of anti-Christ; why so many are going to unite with the dragon, the beast, and false prophet in this final war against God. I want to go further with that tonight, and focus especially upon one word.

In Revelation the picture is given of the coming crisis:

"He causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name" Revelation 13:16,17.

This mark is going to be enforced by a boycott. In the 15th verse we find that the image of the beast is to be worshiped by all under threat of the penalty of death. God says that if any man does worship the beast and his image and receives his mark, he will drink of the wine of the wrath of God.

So the issue is going to be clear cut. Every soul in the world will be under the tremendous pressure of the beast and his image to receive that mark. Yet there are some people who won't receive it because they can pronounce a certain word. They have practiced pronouncing it.

Sometimes life and death is in the balance over a word. In Judges 12 is the story where the Gileadites and the men of Ephraim got into a fight. The men of Gilead took the fords. As the men of Ephraim came fleeing to the fords, they said, "Art thou an Ephraimite? If he denied it, they said, "Say now Shibboleth." When the man tried to say it, he said, "Sibboleth."

The Bible says he could not pronounce it right. There were several thousand of them killed that day because they couldn't pronounce one word. But Shibboleth

isn't the word I am studying tonight. I suppose most of us could pronounce Shibboleth. I wonder how many can pronounce the word on which life and death hinges in the coming crisis.

"Those who would not receive the mark of the beast and his image when the decree goes forth, must have decision now to say, Nay" *Early Writings*, page 67.

That's the word. And bringing it down to modern English, it has one less letter in it. We call it no.

Can you pronounce that word? A failure to pronounce it has been the cause of the loss of one soul after another in one crisis after another down through the ages.

I think of Aaran at Mt. Sinai. He had been left in charge as Moses was called up into the mount to meet with God. As day followed day and week followed week, the multitudes grew restless. They forgot the thunder and lightning. They forgot the wonderful experience of hearing God speak. They forgot the ten commandments. Their minds reverted to the idolatry of Egypt. They came to Aaron and said, Make us gods which will go before us. As for this man Moses who brought us up out of Egypt, we don't know what has become of him.

What should Aaron have said? No. We are told that if he had he could have squelched and stopped that apostasy. But he didn't. Poor, weak-willed, wavering Aaron.

Before that apostasy was stopped thousands of Israel were dead. Why? Because Aaron couldn't pronounce this word. He couldn't say no when he should have said it.

Think of Pilate. From the moment he looked into the eyes of Jesus in that dark Friday morning hour Pilate was convinced this was no ordinary man. He was also convinced Jesus was innocent. I was reading an interesting text. Peter is talking. He is describing what happened:

"The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified His Son Jesus; whom ye delivered up, and denied Him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let Him go" Acts 3:13.

Pilate wanted to release Jesus. He was determined to, but he couldn't quite get his lips to pronounce that little word. He couldn't say no to that angry multitude urged on by those crafty and scheming priests.

The greatest crime in history, the crucifixion of Jesus, was ordered because the governor sitting in the seat of justice lacked the courage to say no.

I think of Samson. Poor Samson. The strongest of men as far as muscle is concerned, but the weakest of men when it came to the crisis. He is with Delilah.

The Philistines have her there as a spy, their partner to try to bring about the weakening of the man who had plagued them; the man that God meant should deliver Israel. Why doesn't he break from the spell? Why doesn't he depart from that wicked woman? He cannot say no. He cannot frame to pronounce it.

Aaron and Pilate and Samson have their counterparts today. The sad thing is that a multitude of those professing to be looking for the coming of the Son of man can't say no. They can't say no to their appetites. They can't say no to their passions. They can't say no to their friends. They can't say no to popular opinion. Their lips cannot frame to pronounce that word. And as a result, they are going over the falls into the great whirlpool.

It is in a crisis that character is revealed, but it is not a built in crisis. It is only revealed. Earthquakes don't make buildings. They just show which ones are built solid and which ones aren't. Fire tries certain materials. It burns up that which is flammable, that which is not fireproof. And fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.

Have you learned to say no? Thank God the Bible tells us about young men and women who learned to say no in their youth. Were Samson failed, Joseph succeeded. Look at him. He was just a seventeen year old boy bound hand and foot and carried down as a slave into Egypt, and there sold to Potiphar.

There he is, faithful to his duties. But Potiphar's wife becomes the temptress, and tries to engage his attention, to get his interest. She looks at him. She wants him to look at her, but he keeps at his business.

The day comes when the answer must be yes or no. Can Joseph's lips frame to pronounce the word? Yes, thank God. He says, "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?"

In that Joseph disclosed the secret of the ability to pronounce the word. Do you know how to be able to say no? It is first to say yes to God. If you say yes to God, you must say no to sin, and every agent of sin. But apart from God, you cannot frame to pronounce it right. You will miss it. You will say maybe or perhaps instead.

Joseph sensed what every youth today needs to sense. Every time we say yes to somebody we have got to say no to somebody else. Every time we say yes to right, we must say no to wrong. And someone is going to get hurt. Someone is going to get offended.

Did Potiphar's wife get offended? Yes. Did she take vengeance? Yes. Did she make things hard for Joseph? Yes, she did. But Joseph knew that if he didn't offend her, he would have to offend God, and he would rather offend her than God. So he said, "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?"

Read the story in Genesis 39. Read it young people, and ask yourself, Will I succeed as Joseph succeeded, or will I fail as Samson failed?

This matter of controlling the affections, the passions, is a tremendous thing. It was a failure on this point that brought a flood of iniquity into the anti-deluvian world that made necessary the flood of waters. It was a failure on this point that made the rain of fire on Sodom and Gomorrah necessary.

Can you say no to lust? Can you say no to impurity? Can you say no to sentimentalism, to flirtation, to infatuation? Are your affections and passions under control? Or is your motto to obey that impulse like Samson?

His was. When he saw a woman he wanted, he said to his parents, Get her, for she pleases me well. She was a Philistine, a Gentile, a pagan, an enemy of God and God's people.

Poor Samson. He was so used to getting what he wanted, and being strong with his muscles he apparently could get it. But he didn't know how to say no to himself, and as the result he disappointed God times without number. Everyone who makes a right decision or a wrong decision will offend someone, grieve someone, disappoint someone.

"Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity;
therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the
oil of gladness above thy fellows" Hebrews 1:9.

There is no such thing as loving righteousness without hating iniquity. There is no such thing as saying yes to God without saying no to sin.

Many lips cannot frame the word no to the visible person, and thus they drift with whatever society they find themselves in. As I pointed out, the secret of Joseph's ability to say no to the tempter was the fact that he had a quickened sense of the presence of God, and he was so anxious to please God that he was willing to displease men.

When the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet get all the world lined up on the side of transgression, you will say yes instead of no to them unless you have such a sense of the presence of God that Jesus is real, near, and more the One to please than all the people in this world.

When is it we are getting ready for this? Now. Those who will not receive the mark of the beast and his image when the decree goes forth must have decision now to say no. See how it is put in *The Desire of Ages*:

"It is the issue of the daily test that determines their
victory or defeat in life's great crisis" *The Desire of Ages*,
page 382.

The daily test determines it.

The battle of the affections and passions is a battle that in a sense begins with a little child. It is the battle over appetite. It is a body craving, a physical desire that needs to be under control.

I love to think of Daniel. At the age of eighteen he was snatched away from his home and carried down as a slave to Babylon. There, by a combination of pressure and favoritism, Satan hoped to make him yield. He is pressured because he is a captive. He is favored by being invited to eat food from the king's table.

There is unclean on that table. There is fermented wine. There is flesh that Daniel has not been in the habit of eating. What did Daniel do? He said no. He said it nicely, sweetly, but firmly.

"But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself" Daniel 1:8.

Daniel did not purpose in his heart that he hoped he wouldn't have to. Daniel did not purpose in his heart that he wished all the young people would get together and decide together to say no so he could do right without being so peculiar. No. "Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank." He requested. He phrased his request in a polite, diplomatic way. But the purpose in his soul was settled.

The Spirit of Prophecy tells us that when Daniel made that decision it influenced the other three, and that if Daniel hadn't been firm, the other three would have failed also. Everything hung on one young man's no. He was only a teenager, but he had learned to say no.

Can you say no boys and girls? Young men and women, can you say no? Can your lips frame to pronounce it, or is that something you can't quite get your tongue around in a crisis?

What was the temptation over in Babylon? The point of appetite. Was that the temptation back in the garden of Eden? Yes. Eve should have said no to the serpent. She did not.

Four thousand years later, as we come to the wilderness, Jesus said no where Adam and Eve failed. He met this temptation on the point of appetite.

"As our first parents lost Eden through the indulgence of appetite, our only hope of regaining Eden is through the firm denial of appetite and passion" *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 3, page 491.

A hundred years ago we were told through the Spirit of Prophecy that most people eat too much. Back in those days it was considered an evidence of good health as well as prosperity to be portly. Today insurance companies and medical doctors all over the country are telling people that if they want to live longer a great many are going to have to eat less. Someone has said that the best reducing

exercise is to put two hands on the edge of the table and push firmly. In other words, the ability to say no.

The *Review and Herald* of January 4 has a very fine article on this subject. It is called *War In The Stomach*. By all means, be sure to read it. It is written by Elder Ferrig, the Nile Union evangelist. He has some things in it that are quite interesting. He quotes the statement from the Spirit of Prophecy that nearly all the members of the human family eat more than the system requires. He writes:

"Some people keep on eating until their profile is grossly disfigured, and the most spectacular part of their anatomy is the part they have pampered most. They face the world with their stomach protruding instead of their chest. Overeating is one of the great sins of this age. A man who conquers his appetite is truly victorious, for on this battle line multitudes meet defeat" *Review and Herald*, January 4, 1962.

Then Elder Ferrig quotes from the inspired writings that gluttony and drunkenness was what caused the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, and the fall of Babylon. He quotes this wonderful statement:

"The controlling power of appetite will prove the ruin of thousands, when if they had conquered on this point they would have had 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" *Counsels on Diet and Foods*, page 163.

He tells of Pompeii, Italy which was destroyed by a volcano in AD 79 over on the Italian peninsula. As you go through where they have excavated and see the ruins, you will find that in those palatial mansions next to the dining room is another room. It is the room to vomit in. Those people had become such slaves to appetite they would sit at their banquets and enjoy the fun of eating until they could eat no more. Then they could go to the next room and vomit and come back and eat some more. No wonder the Bible speaks of some of the pagans of that day:

"Whose God is their belly" Philippians 3:19.

Elder Ferrig tells in this article a very interesting story of a president of one of the universities over in the Middle East who was invited to an Arab home for dinner. After he had eaten all he wished, the hostess urged him to eat more. He replied he had enough, and then she presented something and said, "Please eat this for my sake."

To be polite, he ate it. Then she presented something else and said, "Please eat this for my husband's sake."

And as she put another serving on later, she said, "And this is for my daughter's sake."

When he finally got away he was hardly able to go. He was riding his horse on the way home. He came to a place where the horse drank.

After the horse had drank, he said to the horse, "Please drink some more for my sake." The horse didn't do it.

"Please drink some more for my wife's sake." The horse didn't do it.

Then he said to himself, "Surely the horse is smarter than I am."

It is sometimes hard to say no to well meaning friends on this point of appetite, isn't it? Especially if what they urge us to do is something we would like to do anyway. When candy is offered between meals, we need to say, No thank you. How easy it is to think we mustn't offend them.

By the way, you would be interested in the closing section of this article. The name of it is *Two Meals a Day, or Three?* We are told that most people enjoy better health while eating two meals a day than three. That is from *Diet and Foods*, page 176.

Elder Ferrig continues:

"I knew this counsel was never intended for me. I was not like most people. For twenty-two years I had never eaten between meals, or tasted meat. Surely the two meal a day plan was meant for others.

"One day my wife prodded me. 'You had better eat no supper. Two meals a day may be sufficient for you. Then in time, both of us will weigh about the same.'

"This thought was shocking to me. She might as well have told me to stand on my head for two hours a day, or go around the world on foot. It was not hard to convince my wife, however, that it was better for me to enjoy her wonderful cooking three times a day.

"But last new year's eve I ate no supper, and resolved to eat only two meals a day. This was in 1961. This means three hundred sixty-five meals less than I ate in 1960. I feel better for it, and I now believe that when the inspired writer said most people she had me in mind.

"How I wish I had courage enough to believe her years ago, even as a lad. But I excused myself. I was not yet forty. Because I never ate between meals I felt hungry at supper time. I did not realize that 'The stomach may be so educated as to desire food eight times a day, and feel faint if it is not supplied.' *Diet and Foods*, page 175.

"This two meal a day program is a wonderful plan for most people. Perhaps even you. Give it a fair try, but remember that `Those who are changing from three meals a day to two will at first be troubled more or less with faintness, especially about the time they have been in the habit of eating their third meal. But if they persevere for a short time, this faintness will disappear.'"

I put this parenthetically, but it is important. Don't let the Devil fool you with the suggestion (sometimes subtly suggested and sometimes made right out in the open) that the *Review and Herald* no longer is giving the trumpet a certain sound. Anyone who will read with eyes half open, or who will listen with ears half open, can see and hear the testimony of Jesus again and again. He is trying to help our people do what God has told us to do all these years. Let us appreciate it and follow the light that God gives.

Now I come back to this word that is so hard to pronounce. I repeat that the basic, fundamental lesson on this subject ought to be learned in babyhood and childhood on the point of appetite. If children could be taught to say no to themselves and to well meaning friends when they are three and five and eight and ten and twelve, they could meet the storms and stresses of adolescence a lot easier.

Not that the battle would be over, but they would have acquired strength of character. They would be in the groove of recognizing that to be a Christian means to be able to say no. And young people who have learned to control their appetites in childhood will be able, by the grace of God, to control their affections and passions in the teens and twenties, and thus be prepared to carry on a work for God in this closing hour.

Daniel faced the lion's den when he was an older man because he could face the king's dining table when he was a teenager. Those three young men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, stood up when all the world bowed down to the image. They said no to the king of the world. They said, We don't need to be anxious or worried about answering you, Nebuchadnezzar. Be it known to you that we will not worship your gods. They said no. They had learned it in Jerusalem, and they practiced it in the dining room at the university of Babylon. I thank God tonight for the call to say no in the experiences of common and ordinary events in everyday life.

I come now to a very important point. All these points are important, but may I ask your special attention to this one? We are medical missionaries. While we may rejoice in the ideal life that God has called His people to—the experience of training children in babyhood in these lessons—we must face the reality that as we go out into a world that has lost its way we are meeting with men and women who don't know anything about how to say no. They don't know how to say no to cigarettes or liquor, to fornication and adultery, and to all manner of impurity. They don't know how to say no to losing their temper. They don't know how to say no to dishonesty. They follow their impulses, obey their desires, and become slaves to the Devil and their own disordered minds.

Is there any hope for people like that? That is the question. There is such a thing as getting the mind so ideally fixed on an ideal that we lose hope for people that have never known anything about the ideal.

I thank God for the glorious promise that where sin abounds, there does grace much more abound. I thank God that we need not be ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth.

No matter if a man or woman or boy or girl finds himself deep down in the mire of intemperance and impurity with no self control of any kind, it is your privilege to go to that person and say, Brother, sister, friend, be of good cheer. You can be delivered. You can be victorious. God can help you to say yes to Him and no to sin and Satan.

Notice this beautiful statement:

"We are saved by hope. The fallen must be led to feel it is not too late for them to be men" *Ministry of Healing*, page 165.

Isn't that nice? It is working isn't it? Yes. We see men rescued that have fallen again and again under the influence of liquor. We see men salvaged, rehabilitated, saved by the precious blood of Jesus Christ. God has a program, a way of life, to help people.

"Although the will has been depraved and weakened, there is hope for him in Christ. Open the Bible before the tempted struggling one, and over and over again read to him the promises of God. You must hold fast to those whom you are trying to help else victory will never be yours. Again and again they will be almost overcome by the craving for strong drink. Again and again they may fall. But do not because of this cease your efforts" *Ibid*, page 173.

Have any of us ever failed on some point? Do we need this courage? Oh, yes. Thank God there is hope for us.

"Those who have never passed through such experiences can never know the almost overmastering power of appetite, or the fierceness of the conflict between self-indulgence and the determination to be tempered in all things. Over and over again the battle must be fought" *Ibid*.

Can it be? Oh yes. Thank God there is victory. Thank God there is deliverance.

I can only suggest that you read carefully these two chapters from which I have quoted. One is titled, *Helping the Tempted*, and the other is titled, *Working for the Intemperate*. Read for yourselves how to get victory in a practical way. There are some very practical things in these two chapters on how to get the victory over appetite and passion and every other temptation. In other words, how to learn to say no. And remember that those who desire to be able to stand up against the beast and the image and his mark in the coming crisis must have decision now to say no.

Our Father, we thank Thee this vesper hour for the challenge of Thy message. We are sorry we have ever been weak-kneed and that we have yielded to the temptations of Satan, the clamors of our own nature, the enticements of wicked men or the well meant suggestions of friends that would lure us from the path of strict obedience. God forgive us.

As we see that unless we say no to sin and self we will crucify the Son of God afresh, help us, Lord, to be determined that we would rather say no to sin than say no to Thee. Like Joseph, sensing Thy presence, may we gather courage to resist the tempter. In Jesus' name. Amen.

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