

# Presumption or Faith

#0825

Study given by W.D. Frazee—June 21, 1957

Matthew, the fourth chapter, verses 5-7. This is the experience, you remember, of the temptation of our Lord. He had just been baptized by John in Jordan and driven of the Spirit into the wilderness. He was seeking to receive the special help of God for His mission.

And you remember the first temptation came after 40 days of fast, when He was invited to use His miraculous power to turn the stones into bread to satisfy His hunger. He answered that temptation with the Word of God.

Now, in the fifth verse, we have Satan coming in another way, and this time he quotes scripture. Jesus has quoted scripture, now Satan quotes scripture. And never forget the Devil can quote scripture, my friends. He knows it all by heart.

“Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple, And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone. Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God” Matthew 4:5-7.

My subject tonight is presumption or faith, and as you see, this text deals with this subject. Here is Satan quoting scripture and suggesting to Jesus that it would be a wonderful thing if, there from the pinnacle of the temple, he would throw Himself down, and of course the angels were to catch Him and see to it that no harm came to Him.

And Satan quoted scripture to prove his point. Satan suggested that the promise of God covered just such a situation. Why, he said, It's written there in the 91<sup>st</sup> Psalm:

“For he shall give his angels charge over Thee...They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone” Psalm 91:11-12.

But Jesus didn't respond as Satan hoped He would. He didn't throw Himself down. No, not at all. Quick as a flash, the Holy Spirit brought to His mind another scripture which answered and met the wrong application of that first scripture that Satan quoted.

“Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God” Matthew 4:7.

And Satan had to drop that point. Came with another temptation, as you'll read further on.

My point is, dear friends, it may be presumption and not faith that expects God to work a miracle. I want to repeat that. It may be presumption, not faith, that looks to God to work a miracle.

It would have been presumptuous on Jesus' part to throw Himself down, expecting God to work a miracle, for that's what it would have been, to save Him from disaster. It would have been presumptuous, not faith. That's why Jesus didn't do it. And God wants to teach us that there is something greater than miracles, my friends, and that is a firm dependence on a, Thus saith the Lord.

In the little book *Christian Service*, page 228, I read a statement that needs some meditation:

"God does not generally work miracles to advance His truth"  
*Christian Service*, page 228.

He doesn't generally do what? Work miracles. Well, why not? That's what I want you to think of a little tonight. Why doesn't He generally work miracles? Let me tell you this, my dear friends, whenever God generally works miracles they're not miracles any more, for all a miracle is, is an unusual acting of God's power.

I can illustrate it. You remember in the life of Jesus, he found Himself one evening with 10,000 people around Him on the hillslopes there near Galilee, and they had nothing to eat, except on search they discovered a little boy with his lunch with five little buns and two small fish and he was willing for Jesus to use them.

Nice, boys and girls, when we're willing for Jesus to use what we have, isn't it. This little boy was. And you remember that Jesus took the five loaves and two fishes and asked God to bless them, and then He started breaking them off, and before night, 10,000 people ate.

Well, the people thought that was wonderful, and I can imagine some of them thought—I know it—they said, This is the man to be our king. Just look how easy He feeds us, and He can heal all the wounded soldiers, and He can command our armies, and He can just handle everything.

And I suppose some of those poor, weary farmers thought, This is so much better than having to go out here and plow ground and then harrow it and throw seed in and wait for it to grow and hope the rains will come right, and then, finally, to have to go out there and cut it with a sickle and bring it in and tread it out and get the grain out from the head, and then winnow it and have the wind blow the chaff away, and then have to take that wheat and grind it up into flour and make bread. Why, my, this man can do it all in five minutes instead of days and weeks and months of work.

But I want to ask you something, friends. Those men that for the first time had eaten of bread supplied by a miracle, were there very many of them that ever ate

bread like that again? No. And do you think that Jesus was trying to teach His disciples—watch this—do you think He was trying to teach His disciples, If you only have enough faith, you won't have to plow and sow and reap and grind and bake anymore? Was that what He was trying to teach them?

Some people act as if that was what He was trying to teach them, but He wasn't, my friends, not at all. That was a miracle, which is an unusual action of God's power. That doesn't mean that there's any *more* power there and that it's *greater* power. It's just unusual. That's all, that's all.

Let me illustrate it this way. Suppose that every day we see a man walking along here at 7:30 in the morning on his way to work: Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday; Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday; Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday. Every morning at 7:30 we look out the window and we see that man walking by.

After we had seen that for days and weeks and months, we would come to expect it, wouldn't we. We would expect that as the regular thing. But suppose that some morning, instead of coming at 7:30, he comes at 6:30. It would catch our attention, wouldn't it? Yes. We'd say, I wonder what's happened. I see Mr. Jones going by an hour early this morning.

But, my dear friends, it takes the same kind of power to walk by at 6:30 that it does at 7:30, doesn't it? Yes, yes. And do you know it takes the same kind of power—exactly the same, no more and no less—for God to make wheat and make bread in five minutes or in five months, just the same kind of power. It takes divine power. You and I couldn't do it if we had 5,000 years. Could we? No.

And so, miracles, I repeat, are not something greatly to be desired and wished for and thought of as the things we all could do every day if we just had enough faith. No.

"God does not generally work miracles to advance His truth. If the husbandman neglects to cultivate the soil, God works no miracle to counteract the sure results. He works according to great principles made known to us, and it is our part to mature wise plans, and set in operation the means whereby God shall bring about certain results" *Christian Service*, page 228.

Why, no, friends. Instead of Jesus trying to teach those people that afternoon on the hillslope that from now on, if they had enough faith, they'd never need to plow or sow or reap or grind or bake again, it was just the opposite. He was trying to teach them that He, as the Creator, *could* do it all in a few minutes, and therefore, the fact that He worked through their cooperation in sowing and reaping, in grinding and baking—the fact that He did that when He *could* do it all in five minutes Himself—showed that He thought *that* was the better plan. The regular plan is the better plan.

Do you believe it? Are you satisfied? Well, you can think about it quite a while. Let me say, friends, there are many, many people today that have the idea—some rather hazy and nebulous, some more clear-cut—but there are millions of

people that have the idea that when God is at work, things happen miraculously, and if things don't happen miraculously, they doubt if God is around.

And that leads them to a third error, and that is this. When they see things happen miraculously, they conclude that God must be at work, when it could be the Devil. The Devil? Would the Devil—could the Devil—work miracles? Oh, yes.

Revelation, the 16<sup>th</sup> chapter, the 14<sup>th</sup> verse:

“For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty”  
Revelation 16:14.

Let me tell you, friends, we're going to see some of the greatest miracles of the ages performed by men who are under the influence of miracle-working demons. We're going to see the sick healed, we're going to see:

“...fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men” Revelation 13:13.

The Bible says that in plain language in Revelation, the 13<sup>th</sup> chapter, and the 13<sup>th</sup> verse. And this power that brings fire down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, it says:

“...deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do...” Revelation 13:14.

The great multitudes will be deceived because they're looking for miracles—they want miracles.

But, you say, Doesn't God ever work miracles? Sure. Why doesn't He do it all the time? Because His regular plan is the best plan in most cases. But there are times when the best way to feed the people is by a miracle. *Usually*, the best plan is to let them plow, reap, grind, bake, because that gives them a chance to cooperate with God.

Now, in *Acts of the Apostles*, page 284, I read another comment on this same point:

“...the operations of the Spirit are always in harmony with the written word. As in the natural, so in the spiritual world. The natural life is preserved moment by moment by divine power...” *Acts of the Apostles*, page 284.

That is, our physical life—our breathing, our heartbeats, the digestion of food and all that—it takes place by divine power. Watch:

“...yet it is not sustained by a direct miracle, but through the use of blessings placed within our reach. So the spiritual life is sustained by the use of those means that Providence has supplied” *Acts of the Apostles*, page 284.

Do you see? My daily life is supplied by the mighty power of God, but how does God supply it to me? He supplies it through the food I eat, through the water I drink, through the air I breathe.

And so in the spiritual life, it says. Do I want spiritual life? Then I must make use of the agencies which God has provided. Do I want *more* life? Then perhaps I need more spiritual food, more spiritual bread, more spiritual exercise, more use of other agencies and blessings that God has placed where? Did you get that little expression? Where has He put them? Within our reach. That's right. Well, then, sometimes we need to reach for them, friends.

Now, tonight, the particular agency or influence that I wish to study that bears upon our spiritual life is that of environment... environment. And environment, of course, means the things or place around us.

I've been quite interested in studying nature to notice that certain plants grow in certain environments and not in others. On these 500 acres right here at Wildwood, you can go to certain parts of the place and you will see certain plants growing.

Do you want to find mountain laurel growing? You must climb the heights and get up there on those cliffs, and there you'll find the mountain laurel. You won't find it down here. But up there on that hillside, you'll find the mountain laurel. Why? It is in its environment—the proper environment for that particular plant.

Do you want to find willows? Well, you won't find them up there on the heights growing next to the laurel. Oh, no. You go down here along the branch, along the waterways, and there you will find the willows growing down by the water. Each plant has an environment which is conducive to its life.

My dear friend, do you want to get ready for translation? Do you want to get ready for the coming of Jesus? Do you want to leave this world alive? Some people are going to do it. This sin-sick, war-weary world is soon to be left by a group of people who are going to travel with Jesus to the glorious city of God. Oh, I want to go on that trip. Don't you?

Do you know what the passport is? It's a character—a character like Jesus. And the reason that Jesus hasn't come yet to take us out of all the trouble of this world is because the people—you and I—haven't gotten our characters to that point where He can accept us for the trip. Do you see? And so our time now is for just one thing—to develop those characters.

Ah, but somebody says, Only God can do that. That's just the point, friends. That's what a lot of people think, and it's the truth, but it's not all the truth. It's the truth that only God can develop our characters, but it's also true that while we can

never do it without Him, He *will* not do it without us. He has revealed the principles that bear on the development of those characters. He has told us the agencies, combining, that will enable us to develop those characters, and He has told us specifically the environment in which those characters best grow, and that's what I want to look at with you tonight.

Now, I want to ask you something, before we go into that. If God has revealed the environment in which that kind of character grows, and we either carelessly or deliberately ignore or defy this instruction, are we not tempting God, my friends? Are we not expecting Him to work a miracle? And is that faith or is it presumption?

When God has told us the environment to grow those characters, and we fail to enter into that environment, and instead we cast ourselves down from the pinnacle of the temple and say, Oh, God will protect us somehow. It's only God that can save us anyway, so we'll pray, and we'll pray all the harder, and maybe we'll get through.

But maybe we won't, friends. Maybe God means what He says. Maybe His way of developing those characters is by helping people to believe and follow His instructions. Very well.

What about the environment? First, let me cover this point, lest anybody should misunderstand. God can and does work miracles, my dear friends, and when people, doing the best they can, the best they know to follow His instructions, find themselves in an environment which is not the best, they need not lose heart, friend. They need not lose heart.

They can look up to God like Jesus did on the hillslopes of Galilee and say, Father, here I am with an impossible-looking situation. Won't you work a miracle, and God did it. Didn't He? Yes. And God will do it for you, my friend.

But, oh, let men beware of presuming on that. That's presumption. Faith is believing God will work a miracle when it *has* to come that way. Presumption is believing God will work a miracle when it *doesn't* have to come that way. That's the difference between faith and presumption.

All right. Now, we're going to study this matter of the environment in which the characters for translation are developed. Where are we going? Well, we're going back to Eden. Well, let's go back to Eden, then, in our thinking. What kind of environment did God give our first parents? He gave them a beautiful garden home, as Genesis 1 and 2 describes. He gave them a program of life in which out there in the garden they found their home, their food, their labor, their recreation, their place of worship—everything was right there. Is that correct? Yes.

And, dear friends, if they had only been simple enough in faith and obedience to do what God said and *stay* there, they would have developed characters which could have been immortalized, and it is still true, even under conditions of sin, that the nearer we can get to the Eden life and the Eden program, the easier it is to develop the Eden character.

Now, you remember in studying the Bible that the third chapter of Genesis tells us about their fall, and the fourth chapter of Genesis tells us about Cain and Abel, and you remember that Cain became a murderer—killed his brother.

And do you know what Cain did soon after that? Well, the Bible tells us in the 17<sup>th</sup> verse. It says Cain:

“...builded a city, and called the name of the city, after the name of his son...” Genesis 4:17.

That’s the first use of the word city in the Bible. Not a very glorious beginning. The first city was established by a murderer—a murderer, a fugitive, a man that was in rebellion against God and God’s law. He built the first city.

Now, as we come on down through the book of Genesis, we find that there came to be two great groups of men. They are called the sons of God and the sons of men, in the sixth chapter of Genesis.

Those who followed the Cain program—the city program, the wickedness program—they became more and more corrupt. But those who followed the leadership of Seth, who was born to Adam and Eve in place of Abel, they tended to withdraw from those influences. And in the fields and forests, among the mountains and the hills and the valleys—out away from these concentrated aggregations of humanity these cities which have always been the cesspools of vice and corruption—away from those, they sought to develop characters that God could eventually transplant back to Eden above.

One of those, particularly, that we think of is Enoch, the seventh from Adam. He is spoken of especially in the fifth chapter of Genesis, as the man who walked with God, and he was one of those two characters that so far in this world was translated. Do you remember? After living in this world 365 years, walking with God, he was taken to heaven without ever dying. That’s what the Bible says. Oh, friends, he’s up there now—Enoch is there. How did he get there?

“By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God” Hebrews 11:5.

He was translated to heaven because he developed a character here in this world that pleased God, and he did not develop it in Cain’s city, my friends. He developed it out in the hills.

Now, he came from the hills down into the plains where those cities were and preached to those people. Proof? In the next to the last book of the Bible—the book of Jude. The New Testament tells us that Enoch was a prophet and a preacher. He came to those wicked people. The 14<sup>th</sup> verse:

“And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of

his saints, To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds..." Jude 1:14-15.

Enoch went to those wicked cities and preached the message of repentance, as John the Baptist preached it thousands of years later. He pled with those people to turn from their wicked ways, but my friends, he did not stay there and live with them in that wicked environment.

He dared not, we are told, trust himself to such an atmosphere. He had a much greater fear of sin than some of us have, I'm afraid. Enoch, a pure, holy man, a prophet, would not dare trust himself to live among that sort of thing, my friends. He withdrew, and back there in the hills, he got an experience with God that enabled him to pour forth the truth with power.

Oh, friends, is there a lesson in the antediluvian world for us? Is there? If we want to develop characters, what kind of environment shall we choose? You answer it.

I come on down this side the flood. The great flood of waters had buried those sinners—those giants, in physique and in wickedness—they were all buried, and oh, what a world it was after the deluge.

But as men began to multiply, that same spirit of sin and of centralization and consolidation began to assert itself, and we go back to the book of Genesis and we read of Nimrod. Not too many years after the flood, he's getting ideas. He's gathering together the people, and he's building that great tower of Babel. Read about it in Genesis 10 and 11.

What is it? It's a city—the great city of Babylon or Babel—and you remember that word means confusion. The cities have been places of confusion ever since, my friends.

Did God tell them to do that? Precisely, no. He told them just the opposite. He said, Scatter out. Decentralize. They said, No, we're going to build a city and a tower whose top shall reach to heaven. That was the first skyscraper, and men have been trying ever since to make great names for themselves by building great structures and great cities.

What did God do? God called Abraham out of that land. He said, Abraham, I have a work for you to do—a mission for you to fulfill—a character for you to develop—and, Abraham, you can't develop it here. You can't do here the work that I want done. Come, I'm going to take you into a land that you don't know much about, but I'll lead you there.

And so Abraham came, in the providence of God, to the land of Canaan, and what did he do? Did he build a city? No, no. He was a wealthy man. It wasn't because he was poverty stricken. But, ah, my friends, he lived the simple life of a farmer. He had flocks and herds. You don't have flocks and herds on Broadway.



Living in tents and tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the inheritors with him of the same promises, Abraham lived a simple pastoral life. See him as he sits there under the oaks at Mamre, with angels of God for his visitors. Yes, Abraham was carrying out the divine plan.

And thank God, Abraham is going to be in the kingdom. He's going to see that blessed land on which he set his heart, and Isaac is going to be there and Jacob, and the names of Jacob's 12 sons are going to be one on each one of those 12 gates. Friends, I want to go through those gates. Don't you? Yes.

But I want you to look at another experience, right there in those early chapters of Genesis. There was a young man that went along with Abraham—his nephew. Do you remember his name? [Audience: Lot] Yes. He had a wife. We're not told her name, but she stands out like a great warning beacon on the pages of sacred history, and Jesus said to His disciples:

"Remember Lot's wife" Luke 17:32.

Well, what was it about Lot and his wife to remember? Ah, you remember that as their cattle and herds and everything else multiplied, there came a situation in which Abraham said to Lot, It looks like there's going to need to be a bit of division of the land now. He says, You can take anywhere you want.

And Lot—poor, covetous, greedy Lot—he thought of Sodom and Gomorrah, those beautiful cities down there in the vale beyond the sea of the salt, there life flowed on in a wonderful way, as he saw it. The climate was tropical, things were easy, wealth and luxury abounded.

"...pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness..."  
Ezekiel 16:49.

Was the program, as the Bible tells us. And so Lot—he thought of his children coming up, he thought of the educational advantages in Sodom, he thought of the social advantages in Sodom, he thought of the economic advantages of Sodom, and he chose that plain of Jordan. He:

"...pitched his tent toward Sodom" Genesis 13:12.

Didn't move in—oh, no. He was one of these suburban commuters, doubtless, for a while. But, ah, soon, it came to be very clear to Lot and his family that, if Sodom was good to live *near*, it was good to live *in*. So he moved in, and he finally became one of the judges of that city. And still a Christian? Yes. Still a Sabbathkeeper? Yes. Still a lover of the truth of God? Yes.

And Peter tells us that his righteous soul was vexed from day to day with their filthy conversation and with the awful wickedness of that city. Why didn't he move? My dear friends, that's just the point. Oh, what a terrible, terrible delusion it is to think that we can live in sin, surrounded by sin, of our own free choice, and that it will not affect us.

And so, while his soul was vexed to a certain extent and doubtless he cried out against it and preached against it and all that, yet what happened? Ah, friends, his children grew up, and they weren't vexed as bad by what they were surrounded with as Lot was.

That's the point, dear fathers and mothers. Do not think—oh, do not think that you can live in these cities and your children not be affected. Your soul may be vexed with the sin, and you may say, Well, I don't like it, but let me tell you, the mind becomes accustomed to what it sees day by day. How is it the poet puts it?

Vice is a monster of such frightful mien,  
As to be hated needs but to be seen;  
Yet seen too oft, familiar with her face,  
We first endure, then pity, then embrace.  
Alexander Pope

And so, it came to pass with the family of Lot, and finally, my dear friends, we see two angels approaching the gate of the city, and it's the last night of Sodom, but nobody knows it. There are the gay throng, whirling down Broadway. There's marrying and giving in marriage. There's fornication and adultery. There's unnamable and unmentionable crimes going on of all kinds. Life is one gay, giddy, greedy whirl, and the last night of Sodom has come.

Nevermore will the inhabitants of that doomed city see the sun set red. Nevermore, my dear friends, will the sun set on a day of money-making and usher in a night of pleasure—no. This is Sodom's last night.

What's the matter? Sodom has filled up her cup of iniquity. And you know the story. You know how the angels of God came in there. You know how they told Lot, Have you got anybody in this city? Have you got any sons-in-law or sons or daughters? Go out and get them and tell them to get out of the city for God is going to do what? Destroy it. And do you know how many of them listened to him? Not one. The Bible says:

“...he seemed as one that mocked unto his sons in law”  
Genesis 19:14.

Do you know why? Why, because he was living right in there with them, friends. They thought, Why no, this city is not going to be destroyed, and how can Lot believe it. If he believes it, his mind is temporarily out of gear, not working. He must have had some crazy spell. Why, Lot's property is here, his business is here, his family is here, he's a judge—why he doesn't believe the city is going to be destroyed. If he does, he's just temporarily out of his head. So they paid no attention.

But with the morning, you remember how the angels laid hold of Lot and his wife and the two children that still lived at home, and they actually physically, bodily, laid hold on them and pulled them out of that city.

Oh, read the story there, friend, in Genesis, the 19<sup>th</sup> chapter. It's one of the most pathetic stories in all the Bible. Read it for yourself. Read it again if you're ever tempted to go into or linger in Sodom or near it, friends, because the word of the living God is:

"Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot...Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed"  
Luke 17:28, 30.

People today are repeating that history. Lot and his wife have their modern counterparts, and the children of Lot and his wife are growing up around us today and filling in the picture exactly as those sons and daughters of Lot did back there. God pity us, my friends.

Will you keep in mind that straight through, Lot kept up a sort of Christian experience. It *can* be done. Even in Sodom, a man can keep up a certain measure of Christian experience, but oh, friends, I'd hate to have the kind of experience Lot had. Wouldn't you?

And do you remember that morning, as the angels talked to him and said, Lot, do you see that mountain? Run for that mountain because God is going to burn up this city and Gomorrah and the other cities here—he's going to burn up this whole plain—run for the mountains. Do you remember what Lot said?

Oh, he turned to the angel—to the angel, mind you—Lot said, Oh, my Lord, here is a little city over here. Can't you spare that one for me? Why, if I go to the mountains, some evil will overtake me up there. Poor Lot. So utterly oblivious to the terrible sea of evil in which he was even then existing, afraid of some evil out in a wild place. I suppose he was afraid some wild beast or some snake or something would be up there. City people sometimes are, you know, afraid to get out away from the sidewalks. Poor Lot. Some evil will overtake me if I get up there in that mountain.

And God—merciful God—said, All right, Lot. I've heard you in this. Here's this little city. You can stay there. I'll spare that. It's amazing the patience of God, friends. And that's what God is letting some people do today—temporize and rationalize and delay—but oh, read the rest of the chapter, and you know the awful story. Lot finally had to get out even of that little city, and he went up and lived in a cave, and you know those awful sins of incest that his daughters committed, and the drunkenness that they got their father into. It's a terrible story, terrible, but that's the end of living in Sodom, my friends.

In fact, the story shows that it's possible to stay so long in Sodom that, even if he'd get into the country, it's too late to do anything for the children—too late, too late. It's happening all around us today, and we could weep tears by the bucket if it would do any good, friends.

But oh, there seems to be such a paralysis upon fathers and mothers. They think of the economic advantages of being in and around these cities, the social advantages, the educational advantages, and oh, everything like that, exactly the way Lot did. And they will end up—God knows it and God warns us—they will end up just

as Lot did. If they're saved at all, saved as by fire, and with their children lost, and in many cases the companion lost.

Friends, I don't want to go to heaven that way. I don't want to go to heaven a lonesome father—a lonesome father. Do you? Oh, no, no. I want my dear ones to be *with* me, and I want to be in an environment that will help—help every one of us to get ready for that trip in the chariot with Jesus. Don't you, friends? Oh, yes. Let's do it, friends—let's do it. God help us to do it.

I want to read you a few sentences here. Oh, there's so much I *could* read, friends. I can't begin to read you what I had laid out here tonight, but I want to read you just a few statements. I'm going to read you from *Evangelism*:

“As God's commandment-keeping people, we must leave the cities. As did Enoch, we must work in the cities but not dwell in them...Lot could have preserved his family from many evils had he not made his home in this wicked, polluted city. All that Lot and his family did in Sodom could have been done by them, even if they had lived in a place some distance away from the city” *Evangelism*, page 77-78.

Abraham helped the people of Sodom—you remember—but he didn't get down and live with them in that city in order to do it. He kept his outpost center out there. All he did to help them was from a distance, friends. I tell you, somewhere along the line we're going to get in earnest about this matter of environment.

“We must make wise plans to warn the cities, and at the same time live where we can shield our children and ourselves from the contaminating and demoralizing influences so prevalent in these places” *Ibid.*, page 76.

But now, my friends, that leads me to the next point. You know, the Devil has come down with great wrath, the Bible says, because he knows he has but a short time. That's the 12<sup>th</sup> chapter of Revelation. And do you know the main trouble with these cities? It's the things people see and the things they hear. Right?

And within my short lifetime, two of the most amazing inventions in history have come, making it possible to bring the sights of the cities and the sounds of the cities into the most remote country place. You know what I'm talking about? Yes, you know. Radio and television—radio and television. Marvelous, aren't they—wonderful. Yes, yes. It's according to who's at the mike, which way they're wonderful.

I want to read you something. This was written before radio and television. The message that the Lord's messenger gave in the St. Helena Sanitarium Chapel, July 14, 1902. It's now in the little *Notebook Leaflets, Education No. 1*. Listen:

“Some fathers and mothers are so indifferent, so careless...  
'We are in the world,' they say, 'and we cannot get out of it.'  
But, parents, we can get a good way out of the world, if we

choose to do so. We can avoid *seeing* many of the evils that are multiplying so fast in these last days. We can avoid *hearing* about much of the wickedness and crime that exist.

Everything that can be done should be done to place ourselves and our children where we shall not see the iniquity that is practiced in the world. We should carefully guard the sight of our eyes and the hearing of our ears, so that these awful things shall not enter our minds. When the daily newspaper comes into the house, I feel as if I wanted to hide it, that the ridiculous, sensational things in it may not be seen. It seems as if the enemy is at the foundation of the publishing of many things that appear in newspapers. Every sinful thing that can be found is uncovered and laid bare before the world" *Notebook Leaflets, Volume 1*, page 79.

What would she say now with radio and television? Oh, my dear friends, I don't want to be like Lot. Do you? I want to be like Enoch, and we have our choice. We can choose our environment.

Now, I want to repeat what I said a while ago, and I want to make it very clear. God *can* work miracles and God *does* work miracles for some people. Do you remember that Joseph as a young man of 17 found himself down in Egypt, a veritable cesspool of sin, vice and paganism and he was kept pure and untainted all through that experience. Do you remember? Why? God worked a miracle. And why? Because Joseph was down there as a captive, not by his choice, that's why.

Come down hundreds of years later and there's Daniel and his three friends in Babylon. They are preserved untainted and uncorrupted—young men surrounded with all the sights and sounds of Babylon. Why were they preserved? Because they were there by the providence of God, my friends, captives in a strange land.

Some of you young men may be in the army before long. If you are put there not by your own choice but by circumstances that you cannot control, no matter how vile the surroundings, no matter how wicked the atmosphere, you can look up to God and like a person out in water way over their head, you can say, Dear Lord, help me, preserve me, save me, and God will do it. Won't he, brother. [Brother in the audience: Yes] Yes, He will. Thank God, there are men here that can testify to that.

But is that any reason for saying to young people, Oh, well, the world is wicked, of course, but everybody has to meet it, so just pray God to keep you and don't worry too much about the wickedness of the world about you. Is that the message to give people? No, my friends. By the Word of God, no.

Select the very best environment possible for yourselves and for your children. That's the message of this hour, my friends—that's the message of this hour.

I was interested in this statement in the book, *Adventist Home*, written during the closing years of the Lord's messenger, page 146:

“So long as God gives me power to speak to our people, I shall continue to call upon parents to leave the cities and get homes in the country, where they can cultivate the soil and learn from the book of nature the lessons of purity and simplicity...I love the beautiful flowers. They are memories of Eden, pointing to the blessed country into which, if faithful, we shall soon enter” *Adventist Home*, pages 146-147.

Oh, that that message may grip our hearts. Well, friends, I could give you more tonight on some of the reasons for being out in the country, but I don't think I need to do that. I'll leave this with you tonight, and I want to just review now. We're studying tonight the question of presumption or faith. Presumption is to expect God to work a miracle when it isn't necessary. Faith is doing what God says to bring about the results necessary without a direct miracle, and then, if we find ourselves in a situation we can't control, asking God to work the miracle. That's faith.

This lesson tonight doesn't need to discourage anybody that's caught in the whirlpool of sin in these cities and can't get out right now, but I'll tell you, friends, it'll keep him from going to sleep there and losing his soul—this message will—if he'll listen to it.

If we find ourselves—any of us—in these cities, we should do two things. First, we should keep awake, alive, alert, praying God to keep the hearing of our ears and the sight of our eyes from as much wickedness as possible. And second, we should pray God every day, Lord help me to get out of Sodom and help me to get out soon, and let me tell you, the more we sense this, the faster we'll move.

You know, this morning, I was up on the trail working with a tool, and before I had the slightest idea of what was happening, I must have hit into a hornet's nest or something of that kind, because faster than I can tell you those things were on my hands, and let me tell you, I moved, friends—I moved—I got clear out of there just as fast as I could—and I had four or five stings to keep it fresh in my mind for several hours.

And you know, somehow, I couldn't help but think of this subject tonight, as it happened to me and as I meditated on it, and I thought, That's just the point. The reason that we're so slow in moving out of Sodom, friends, is because it doesn't hurt us enough. If we only weren't half paralyzed, if we weren't under the anesthetic—the drug anesthetic of the Devil—we would be so hurt by the sin and wickedness of this world that we would flee as God told Lot to flee. Ah, He said, Run, run for the mountains. But poor Lot—half anesthetized, half doped, half drugged—he pled for a little city, and that's what many are pleading for today.

Now, I want to give a word to those who are living in the country. Do not think, my dear friends, that just because you're out under the oaks at Mamre that the Devil is going to leave you alone. Oh, no, no, not at all. He's going to tempt you in every possible way he can, but your environment is in your favor instead of against you. That's the difference.

But you still must pray, but it will be easier to pray with the birds singing than with the fire wagons running by. It will be easier to pray with the atmosphere of the perfumed flowers floating in the room than it will be with the carbon monoxide and the tobacco smoke of the multitude. It will be easier, but still it'll take all you have to do it.

So remember, just moving to the country won't save you—not at all. It'll still take all you've got. That's why it's so important to get into the country—because it still takes all you have to make it. Do you see? You can't afford to give yourself the handicap.

But whether it's in the city like a slave, as Joseph was, like a captive as Daniel was, or whether it's out in the country like Abraham was or Enoch, remember this—and if you forget all the rest we've studied tonight, don't forget this—the power to save you is of God:

“Not of works, lest any man should boast” Ephesians 2:9.

“For by grace are ye saved through faith...” Ephesians 2:8.

Ah, you say, Well, if that's so, then what's the use of paying attention to these things? Because God does what we ask *Him* to do when we do what He asks us to do. That's it, friends. Never think that environment will save you. It won't. There'll be thousands of people in the country lost while millions in the city are lost.

But listen:

“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God” Ephesians 2:8.

Plead with God every day, Lord, give me the victory that can come only through beholding my Lord Jesus Christ—on the cross dying for me, before the mercy seat living for me, and soon in the clouds coming for me to take me home—home to that Eden land where we shall build houses and inhabit them and plant vineyards and eat the fruit of them.

Oh, let us bow our heads as we seek God for His blessing. Dear Father, we cannot of ourselves interpret and apply the message of this hour, but we trust to Thy Spirit to apply it to our hearts every one of us, and we pray that each of us shall study how to weed out of his life every Babylonian influence, every thought that tends downward.

Take us out of Sodom, Lord, and take Sodom out of us. Bring us back to Eden. Save us and save our children, Lord, for Jesus' sake, amen.

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