

Busy Here and There

#0682

Study given by W.D. Frazee—September 13, 1963

The Lord awakened me in the morning hour and began to talk to me about this meeting. There were some things laid upon my heart, and in connection with them the words to a little song. What did Jesus say to those fishermen? Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.

What a complicated program we make out of the effort to do it. How simple Jesus made it. Will there be some people who will do it? Oh, yes.

“These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth” Revelation 14:4.

First they follow Him here, and then they follow Him in the hereafter.

It is that work of soul winning that Jesus invited James and John and Peter and Andrew and Matthew and the rest to follow Him in that I want to study with you, for I feel we have a most wonderful opportunity.

This isn't just a general study. I have certain specific things in mind dealing with the group that is here.

I am so glad for the flood of light from these Old Testament Scriptures. What a blessing they bring to our lives.

“And as the king passed by, he cried unto the king: and he said, Thy servant went out into the midst of the battle; and, behold, a man turned aside, and brought a man unto me, and said, Keep this man: if by any means he be missing, then shall thy life be for his life, or else thou shalt pay a talent of silver” 1 Kings 20:39-40.

That is roughly equal to a thousand dollars. If this man escapes, then your life goes for his, or else you pay a thousand dollars.

“And as thy servant was busy here and there, he was gone. And the king of Israel said unto him, So shall thy judgment be; thyself hast decided it” 1 Kings 20:39:41.

Who decides our judgment? We decide it. Just like this man. Did he understand the commission that was given to him? Yes. He told the king about it.

This was not a lazy man. Far from it. He was a very active man. There are lazy people, and when war is on they are looking for something to do way back

behind the lines. But this man was out in the midst of the battle. Moffatt translates it, "In the thick of the fight." So he was brave and active. But someone who apparently had the authority to do it turned to him and said, Right now your job is to take this prisoner and guard him. Don't let him get away.

We are not told many things in the story we might be interested in. Was this a valuable prisoner? Was it a captain? Whatever the reason, the prisoner was to be carefully guarded. And to impress it on the man's mind, he was told that if he let this prisoner get away then his life is for the prisoner's life, or else he must pay and pay dearly.

In telling about it the man said he was busy here and there and all of a sudden the prisoner was gone. The king told the man that what was going to happen to him was settled. Either his life or a talent of silver. Moffatt translates it, "If for any reason he is missing, it shall be your life for his." It didn't make any difference what the reason was.

I looked in the scriptural index and could not find any comment on this text. I looked in the Seventh-day Adventist Bible commentary and couldn't find any Ellen G. White statements on this. But I went to my files and picked out a manuscript that is getting yellow with age. It is a personal testimony that Sister White wrote to her son, James Edson White when he was laboring down here in the Southern field. My heart is moved as I see written across this copy in the handwriting of Sister White's son, Elder W. C. White, the words, "Copy for W. D. Frazee."

Here I find the only place I know of in the Spirit of Prophecy writings where this particular text is commented on. The fact it was written to her son down here in the Southern field appeals to my heart as you and I are seeking to labor for souls. Listen:

"I beg of you to take heed to the warning lest you be placed with the indolent servant who hid his talent in the earth. A working church will be a living church, but while many are listeners, there are others who may go forth from our churches not in their own strength but in the strength of the Lord of Israel. Those who will not disseminate the light that God gives them will not have the increased light. God will not give idlers His rich grace to feed upon. If any would not work, neither should he eat.

"Shall the members of the church come up to the judgment unprepared because they have no sheaves to bring to the Master? One and another will say, 'While I was busy here and there he was gone.' Who was gone? Some soul was gone away from your influence where he can nevermore be reached. He was dropped into the grave unprepared. Everyone has talents of value to use in winning souls to Christ."

There is something involved in this matter that has to do with being prepared or unprepared for the judgment. The king of Israel said to the man, "So shall thy judgment be; thyself hast decided it." This comment says, "Shall the members of the church come up to the judgment unprepared because they have no sheaves to bring to the Master?" Will a soul without sheaves be ready for the judgment? Apparently not.

"One and another shall say, 'While I was busy here and there he was gone.' Who was gone? Some soul was gone away from your influence where he can nevermore be reached" *Ibid*.

I want to turn to something else I have in my files. This too was given to me by Elder W. C. White in a compilation on city work. You can find what I am going to read now in the bound volumes of the *Review and Herald*.

This is from an article that the servant of the Lord wrote at a time when special meetings were being held in Oakland and San Francisco. She was appealing to our people to participate in those soul winning endeavors. She talked to them about it both in Oakland and San Francisco, and published these things in the *Review and Herald*. In this article she quoted from instruction she had given to the church in New York city when Elder Haskell was holding meetings there a few months before. She also quoted from instructions she had given to the Los Angeles church while Elder Simpson was holding meetings down there the previous year.

"Let the believers living near the place you are holding meetings share the burden of the work. They should feel it a duty and a privilege to help make the meetings a success. God is pleased by efforts to set them at work. He desires every church member to labor as His helping hand, seeking by loving ministry to win souls to Christ." *Review and Herald*, December 20, 1906.

If I make an effort to help everyone have a part in soul winning work, how will God feel about it? He will be pleased.

In the same article she quoted from the instruction given a few months before to the Los Angeles church:

"Let the Los Angeles church have special seasons of prayer daily for the work that is being done. The blessing of the Lord will come to the church members who thus participate in the work, gathering in small groups daily to pray for its success. Let not the church members think that efforts should be put forth for them by the one who is impressed to labor for those who have been neglected. When such an effort has been made as has been made in Los Angeles let the members of the church clear the King's highway. Let them show they are in perfect harmony. Let them be on hand at the meetings" *Ibid*.

What does on hand mean? It not only means to be present, but to be available for service for everything that needs to be done. Helping take up the offering. Helping to see that the windows are opened and closed. Helping to see the lights are turned on and off. These things are important, but there is something more infinitely important:

“Let them be on hand at the meetings armed and equipped for service, ready to talk with anyone who may be interested. Let them pray and work for the lost sheep”
Ibid.

We probably feel sorry for this man we read about in the Bible. We might even feel to condemn him a little. But at least he was there where the battle was going on, wasn't he? If he hadn't been, he wouldn't have been assigned a prisoner to watch.

“This is Los Angeles opportunity. In this time when God's message of warning is being so clearly proclaimed, every believer should carefully study and take heed to the words of counsel written by Paul to Timothy. As the church members do their part faithfully, the Lord will lead and guide His chosen ministers, and strengthen them for their important work. In much prayer let us all unite in holding up their hands, and in drawing bright beams from the heavenly sanctuary. We are so hungry to see the work advancing as it should” *Ibid.*

This was written fifty-seven years ago, but I believe it is meat in due season. With it I want to put the following, because it emphasizes this very thing we have called attention to of the great opportunity in speaking to people after the meeting:

“Observe those in the congregation who seem to be interested, and speak to them after the service. A few words spoken in private will often do more good than the whole discourse has done” *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 6, page 68.

I have just read something that says some of you can do something in a few minutes after a meeting more important than I can do in thirty or forty minutes preaching the message. Is that what I read? Maybe I had better read it again to check up.

“Observe those in the congregation who seem to be interested, and speak to them after the service. A few words spoken in private will often do more good than the whole discourse has done.”

Isn't that wonderful? Now if you want something still more wonderful, look in the book *Evangelism* and you will find a statement just like the one I have read in *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 6, except that it says:

“Five words spoken in private will often do more good than the whole discourse has done” *Evangelism*, page 285.

Five words. You do not have to be an orator. How wonderfully simple and how simply wonderful are the plans of God. What do you say?

Let's go back now to our Bible text:

“And as the king passed by, he cried unto the king: and he said, Thy servant went out into the midst of the battle; and, behold, a man turned aside, and brought a man unto me, and said, Keep this man: if by any means he be missing, then shall thy life be for his life, or else thou shalt pay a talent of silver. And as thy servant was busy here and there, he was gone.”

Who was gone? “Some soul was gone away from your influence where he can nevermore be reached.”

That has already happened in some cases. And it if had already happened in every case I would not be giving you this study, for it would be useless. Thank God, there is still an opportunity to get some soul. Some are gone where we can never reach them. We can mourn over them, but while we are mourning over them we should be reaching out for the one that is placed in our hands.

I wonder who this officer is who is assigning prisoners to guards? I believe that is Jesus, by His Holy Spirit. He may use human agents to do it sometimes, but He is impressing human hearts with the need of other human hearts. Our first job is to be in the midst of the battle, and our second is to be watching for the assignment of the Holy Spirit; to be listening for the commission from Jesus saying, “There is your man. Do you see him? There in the fifth row next to the isle. Watch him. He is your man. There is your soul. See that lady back there near the back. See how she is listening? Have a word with her.”

Or it may be someone that God wants you to lay hold of that is not yet at the meeting, because this battle field is bigger than the evangelistic meeting hall.

There will be a hundred different ways that the lesson we are studying can be applied in your life. Those of you who are visiting here today, remember that God brought you here for some purpose. There is some soul that God wants you to guide and guard and keep. Every teacher on this faculty, every student on this campus, every member of the church in this community, brother, sister, friend, I appeal to you. Have you heard the Captain as He has placed a soul in your hands and on your heart? That is His business, and that is your business.

What was the problem with this soldier? He was busy. He was busy here and there. I suggest a few plans that the enemy uses to try to divert us from our work, to distract us so that the prisoner we are supposed to guard gets away.

One way is to let criticism come against us. When criticism came against Nehemiah, his answer was what? I am doing a great work, and I cannot come down (Nehemiah 6:3). Why should the work cease? Thank God, if we will keep at our work of winning souls for Jesus, God will take care of criticism.

That applies to the work as a whole. It applies to the church as a whole. It applies to the institution that God is connected with. It applies to you and me personally. God forbid that we should be so busy in vindicating our reputation, defending ourselves from accusations, that the soul we might have won for Christ slips away and is lost.

Wouldn't that be a tragedy? Wouldn't it be a shame when God says in the judgment, Where is that soul? I would have to say, Lord, you know so many stories were circulated about me, and so many problems came up I just had to take time off to handle all that, and that is why that soul slipped away.

Will the Judge accept that alibi? I don't think so. If it would be a tragedy for a soul to be lost because I was spending my time answering criticism, wouldn't it be a compounded tragedy if souls were lost because I had been diverted because I myself was in the work of criticizing? That will certainly divert and distract me from the work of soul winning, won't it? And if the Devil sees I will fall for that sort of thing, that I will bite that sort of bait, he will furnish me with enough things that I think need to be criticized that there will be no room in my mouth for the words that will win a soul.

The Lord knows there are faults enough all around us. If we chose to spend our time in noticing them and commenting on them we will have precious little time left to win souls. God keep us from it.

There is another thing I want to point out. This man said he was busy here and there. It wasn't just one thing. I will read to you a caution which came to the Battle Creek Church. This came from down in Australia where the servant of God was trying in toil and sacrifice to lay the foundations of a pioneer work. Dear friends, I am thinking very definitely and specifically of our little faculty and student body here tonight as I read this. If you think I am out of place, I want you to come and labor with me. I want to be right. I don't want to be extreme, but I am burdened. I see a danger. I think souls can be lost because we are busy here and there.

"I wish to remind my brethren of the cautions and warnings that have been given me in reference to constantly investing means in Battle Creek in order to make a little more room, or to make things more convenient. While our brethren in America feel at liberty to invest means in buildings which time will reveal that they would do just as well and even better without, thousands of dollars are thus absorbed that the Lord

called for to be used in regions beyond. I have presented the warnings and the caution, as the word of the Lord, but my heart has been made sad to see that notwithstanding all these means has been swallowed up to satisfy these supposed wants" *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 8, page 48.

Were they building bowling alleys or race tracks at Battle Creek? No. They were building additional facilities to do the work of the Lord.

You say, Brother Frazee, I don't think we are anywhere near that danger. There is a lot more we need to build and a lot of improvements we have to make.

I wouldn't be surprised that it is true that there are some more buildings we have to build. I wouldn't be surprised that there are a number of improvements that we must make in our facilities. I don't question that. But we need to be very careful lest we spend one dollar unnecessarily in display or in the effort to make things a little more convenient, or to have a little more room.

I fear that we are in great danger of equating the ability to do this with the approbation of the Lord; that we suppose that the money and the opportunity to have things more convenient, more comfortable means God is blessing us. All we need to do is look down that road and see where it has led other institutions and other groups.

Of course, we wouldn't go as far as some people have gone. We can't. We do not have the means. But when I think of the sacrifice it took in the early years of this place to lay the foundations of this work, I thank God we still have some pioneer places going where students can get out and learn first hand the experiences of grappling with primitive conditions at a sacrificial opportunity.

Let us not be too sure that every plan to make things more comfortable and more convenient is inspired from above. I don't want to be fanatical. I don't want anyone else to be. I don't want to be extreme. God keep us from extremism.

For all I know the man that lost his prisoner might have been busy building a prison when the prisoner escaped. He might have had wonderful plans of what he was going to do, but he was busy here and there, and the man he had been told to guard was gone.

The great truth God wants everyone of us to be impressed with is that everything else we do is secondary to the immediate job of winning and holding a soul for Christ. If we are too busy to do that, we are too busy. And the fact that being too busy is in connection with the work of God only makes the danger more subtle and perilous, and therefore more to be guarded against.

We shall not need to watch to keep people from playing cards or drinking liquor on this campus. We don't have to put things like that in our bulletin. Our danger is the danger of this man. In the midst of battle there are so many things we see need to be done that the soul who needs help may miss it. What do you say

that we let our moderation be known; that we be temperate in all things, and that we let no busyness keep us from the business of soul winning?

“The work above all work, the business of all others that should draw and engage the energies of the soul, is the work of saving the souls for whom Christ died” *Messages to Young People*, page 227.

Let's do it.

A friend of mine was telling me about a friend of his he visited, and as they went into the living room, his friend said, “See that chair over in the corner? It cost me \$5,000.”

My friend gasped, of course.

His friend said, “Yes, that chair cost me \$5,000. Some months ago my wife and I talked it over and decided we needed a new chair. We got it, and after we got the chair and put it there my wife looked around and said, ‘Husband, the drapes don't look right since that chair is there.’ So we had to have drapes that would go with the chair. But when the drapes and the chair got fixed up, the rug didn't look right. And so on around the house until finally \$5,000 went out.”

Do you see what I mean? It isn't for me to judge any individual, but it is for me to give the trumpet a certain sound. That is my job. What each soul does with it is with the soul. Your money is yours. Your time is yours.

Did I say it is yours? It belongs to God. It has been bought with the precious blood of Jesus. While God may keep us from sloppy thinking or acting, and while God may help us to bring this place and every part of it up to the standard of cleanliness and order and good taste and efficiency that God has called for, in the very experience of doing that, wouldn't it be a shame if we would repeat the failure of Battle Creek?

I can tell you that the greatest peril in getting into the ditch over on this side is when we see the ditch over there, and are backing away from it. If we see the ditch of lack of order or cleanliness or lack of taste, and are trying to get away from that, let's be aware that there is another ditch.

Remember that as we get near the end we are going to learn to do more and more with less and less. The work of God is not going to be finished with millions of dollars of equipment piled up. I recognize that God is using millions of dollars of equipment now, but we will not have that when the last moment in the day of salvation ticks off the clock. What will we do? We are told that this work will finish in sacrifice far beyond that which started it.

I pray we will not judge one another or others in other places. That is not our work. That will divert us. Our job is soul winning. And it is amazing how soul winning is the great key to all these problems.

If you are busy enough with soul winning you do not want to spend time criticizing others. If you are busy enough with soul winning you do not want to spend time or money unnecessarily on adornment of either bodies or houses. You are even willing to put up with some inconveniences. Why? Because of that soul.

In closing I want to notice what can be the most important lesson in our study. What was that man supposed to do with that prisoner? Keep him. Do you know what it takes to keep a prisoner? It takes force. It takes watchful force. The prisoner wants to get away. That soldier was supposed to keep his eye on the prisoner, and keep his hand on him. It took force to get the prisoner. It would take force to hold him.

Do you know what it takes in the Christian soldier to get a Christian prisoner? Ah, it takes force far greater than the force of human armies. It takes the force of love. It takes that to get the prisoner, and it takes that to hold him. But for either one of these powers to be effective they must be continuous.

Did you ever see one of these great magnets operate that lays hold of a great pile of scrap iron and lifts it up? When that magnet is put down it will lay hold of hundreds of pounds of material. When it lifts the material up and moves it over, the material drops. Why? They turn off that magnetic power.

That is what is going to happen to the soul who comes to the meeting, and you are not there. That is what is going to happen if the current is turned off.

The current is love. Most of what God gives us to do in His work for people is to get us in contact with them so we can love them. That is one of the greatest reasons He gave us medical missionary work. That is the reason He deliberately planned time consuming treatments.

In this very hour when human ingenuity is being harnessed to the task of finding all sorts of mechanical things that can be done so man hours don't have to be used, God is calling you and me back to simple medical missionary methods that will necessitate prolonged contact with patients.

Health education takes time. Hydrotherapy takes time. The right kind of bedside nursing takes time. But remember that it is not time lost. It is meant to be that way, provided the magnetic force of love is on. And you can be the channel through which that wonderful love lays hold of people.

For nearly forty years I have been in evangelism, and I have seen many workers come and go. I have seen many people learn Bible work. I have worked with many Bible workers and younger ministers. I want to tell you that I have seen Bible workers who were not nearly so skillful in argument that would produce far more people for baptism because they loved them. They were in the homes with them and kept loving them, and some of those people just couldn't resist.

Has Jesus given you anyone to keep? If you will go into the midst of the battle, He will. There is someone to lay on your heart. Has He said to you, Keep

this man, this boy, this girl, this woman? It will be a wonderful thing when He comes to be able to say, Here I am, and the ones you gave me.

Jesus said in His last prayer, "Those that Thou gavest me, I have kept."
Thank God.

Precious Lord, rightly interpret to our hearts the things we have read and studied from Thy Word. Keep us from missing the point by some diverting thought suggested by the enemy. We know he is here to distract and misconstrue. Rebuke him, we pray.

Gloriously reveal to us Thy great love. And as we see the nearness of the end, the shortness of time, and as we think of those who can be won and made prisoners of love, drawn by the cords of divine, yearning affection, make us Thy channels to win and hold men for Thy kingdom. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

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