

The Triangle

Sermon #0921

Study given by W. D. Frazee—January 13, 1961

We have two texts to begin our study tonight. I am reading the American Revised translation:

"Little children, it is the last hour" 1 John 2:18.

"I must work the works of Him that sent Me while it is day:
the night cometh, when no man can work" John 9:4.

Work for the night is coming when man's work is o'er. Little children, it is the last hour, the sunset hour. It is quite a thought to contemplate that the last soul that will ever be won will be won in the time you and I are living. The last opportunity to do anything about gathering souls into the fold will soon be here. The urgency of that was in the mind of Jesus, and He allowed nothing to divert Him from His work.

Years ago we were told by the servant of the Lord:

"We have no time to loose. The end is near. The passage from place to place to spread the truth will soon be hedged with dangers on the right hand and on the left"
Testimonies for the Church, Vol. 6, page 22.

Has that been fulfilled? Oh yes.

"Everything will be placed to obstruct the way of the Lord's messengers, so that they will not be able to do that which it is possible for them to do now. . . . We have warnings now which we may give, a work now which we may do; but soon it will be more difficult than we can imagine. God help us to keep in the channel of light, to work with our eyes fastened on Jesus our Leader, and patiently, perseveringly press on to gain the victory" *Ibid*.

I want to do that. Don't you brothers and sisters? How that has been fulfilled these sixty years since that was published. But the great focal fulfillment of it lies just ahead. We are in the sunset hour, and every moment brings us closer to the end of day. God help us to measure up to our glorious opportunity in this crisis hour.

I have been interested to read what happens to those who do not enter actively and aggressively into the spirit that filled the heart of Jesus. He said He must work while it is yet day; the night comes when when no man can work. He said He must keep at His work. That spirit gripped His heart even when He was a boy.

At the age of twelve He said, "I must be about My Father's business." That's why He was here, and He allowed nothing to divert Him from that.

The great enemy has tried to divert God's people from this work. We are told what the result is of failing to respond to the Master's call to enter actively into efforts to bless and help others:

"It is those who are not engaged in this unselfish labor who have a sickly experience, and become worn out with struggling, doubting, murmuring, sinning and repenting, until they loose all sense of what constitutes genuine religion. They feel that they cannot go back to the world, and they hang on to the skirts of Zion, having petty jealousies, envying, disappointment, and remorse. They are full of fault-finding, and feed upon the mistakes and errors of their brethren. They have only a hopeless, faithless, soulless experience in their religious life"
Christian Service, page 107.

Could there be anyone like that here tonight? If there is, my heart goes out to you, my brother.

Notice the symptoms of this experience. The people described here feel bad in their spiritual experience. It's up and down, back and forth. They are worn out with struggling, doubting, murmuring, sinning and repenting, yet they don't want to go back to the world. They haven't gone back to the world. They are hanging onto the skirts of Zion.

Well thank God they are hanging onto the skirts. That's encouraging. But I tell you friends, a mother can't have too many things hanging onto her skirts if she is going to make any progress. And instead of hanging onto the skirts of Zion, God wants the children of the church to be right in there helping the church carry its load, and go forward and finish its work.

Notice the experience of some who are sinning and repenting, doubting, hanging onto the skirts of Zion. They don't want to go back to the world. They feel bad in their Christian experience. It leads them to be full of fault-finding. They think something is wrong, so they look around to find the trouble with others. They are full of fault-finding and feed upon the mistakes and errors of their brethren.

I wonder if any of the mistakes and errors they feed on are genuine. Do you suppose there could be any errors and mistakes in others? Why yes, the church is full of them. But these people feed on those things. The Bible says, "Wheresoever the carcass is, there will the vultures be gathered together."

This suggests what the root cause of this whole problem is; why it is that people are discouraged and have a sunless, hopeless, doubting, critical experience. The basic reason is that they are not engaged in unselfish labor. The remedy is not to put them in the sanitarium and put hot water bottles around them. The remedy is not for the officers of the church to quit their work and spend all their time warming

them up. That isn't the remedy. For all who are discouraged there is one remedy. It is faith, prayer, and work.

One night the disciples had been dismissed by Jesus because they had wanted to make Him king. He went to pray and He sent them on the lake to row across to the other side. He wanted to give them something practical to do to get their minds off their disappointment and discouragement. The disciples were so full of gloom and disappointment and criticism of Jesus that the Lord had to send them something extra by way of a problem. What was it? A storm.

We are told that God often does that for people. When they have brought problems of disappointment and discouragement upon themselves, God often allows them to have something real to worry about. The disciple's worries were really imaginary. There was nothing for them to worry about. Jesus was handling things. But He was not doing it their way, so they were disappointed. All of a sudden there came a storm, and the water started spilling over into the boat. They had to get busy and work to keep the ship from going under.

Finally Jesus came to them. By that time they were ready to have help His way. They invited Him into the boat, and immediately they were at the land. It's a wonderful story, a wonderful experience. If we have ever gone through that experience spiritually we know how they felt.

If you are discouraged tonight because God hasn't handled things the way you thought He ought to, or your brethren haven't handled things the way you think they ought to, do not think you will ever get out of that experience by complaining and fault-finding and trying to bring your brethren around to your terms. Don't think that. That's not God's way out of your spell of discouragement. You may have to be plunged deeper into problems. Some storm, some sickness, some disaster may have to strike you.

It need not if you will take hold of God's appointed remedy. There is but one remedy for all who are disheartened. Faith, prayer, work. Forget the criticisms and fault-findings. Cease to lay the slightest blame on others for your discouragement. Put it aside. That idea is born of the Devil. Get down on your knees and say, God, forgive me for wasting one moment of the sunset hour in repining and murmuring. God, help me to get out into the harvest field and gather the sheaves while the golden moments are still here.

Ah, if we will do that, friends, the promise is sure. "He that goeth forth with weeping shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him." It's for you, my brother. For you. The glorious hour, the last hour waits. God is waiting for you. Let not one moment be lost in this time of opportunity.

This is the Sabbath set apart by our General Conference as a day of fasting and prayer in behalf of the church throughout the world.

You will notice in this folder that has been prepared by the brethren that in one country in recent months nearly all our workers were imprisoned. Some were tortured.

In another country our youth have been ordered to attend school on the Sabbath or suffer severe consequences.

In still another country Seventh-day Adventist children have been prohibited from attending church or Sabbath school. In two countries tithing has been prohibited, and our leaders are not free to expend church funds to strengthen the church. Thus in country after country the night seems to be falling. Oh friends, what does it mean?

Work for the night is coming under the sunset skies.
While their bright tints are glowing, work for daylight flies.

If one of our brethren here tonight were taken away, I doubt if there would be very much criticism about him among those who have loved him and prayed for him. What do you think? I think it would be like when Peter was put into prison. The whole church united in prayer for him. We are going into that time quickly. My point is, while we pray earnestly during these holy hours for the church in oppressed areas, is this not a summons to the church in the areas of opportunity to press in and do all we can while the golden moments linger?

I would like to deal with two or three very practical things in connection with this. We know that the next great sign that the church is looking for is the passing of the National Sunday Law. For years after Jesus left this world His church in Judea looked forward to the time when the Roman armies would lay siege to Jerusalem. What had Christ told them to do? Flee. They were to look forward to it. They were to pray about it. They were to pray that it would not come on the Sabbath or in the winter. In the very act of praying about it, they become impressed with the fact that it was coming, and that they were to flee.

Do you suppose that was one reason Jesus told them to pray about it? Doubtless. Did they watch for the sign? Did they see it? Did they know when it came? Did they recognize it? Did they flee?

Yes. Thank God, the answer to all that is yes. *Great Controversy* says not one Christian perished in the destruction of Jerusalem. Not one. They were all alert and alive. They watched for the sign that Jesus gave, and when it appeared they were ready to act, and they did act.

We need not speculate as to the lesson for us today. I read:

"The time is not far distant when, like the early disciples, we shall be forced to seek a refuge in desolate and solitary places. As the siege of Jerusalem by the Roman armies was the signal for flight to the Judean Christians, so the assumption of power on the part of our nation in the decree enforcing the papal sabbath will be a warning to us. It will then be time to leave the large cities, preparatory to leaving the smaller ones for retired homes

in secluded places among the mountains. And now, instead of seeking expensive dwellings here, we should be preparing to move to a better country, even a heavenly. We should be studying to economize instead of spending our means in self-gratification. Every talent lent of God should be used to His glory in giving the warning to the world" *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 5, page 464.

This is very practical. It is dealing with tangible things, things that we can see and get our hands on. Do you think we will know when the National Sunday Law is passed? Why sure. That's why it is set forth as a sign. A sign is something you can see. If you can't see it, it isn't a sign.

I would like to have you think of a very practical problem brothers and sisters. We have hundreds and thousands of dear believers scattered all over the country, and hundreds and thousands of them are in these big cities. They are in New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, and others. What will God's people in the great cities who read the *Testimonies* do when the National Sunday Law is passed? Let me read this again:

"As the siege of Jerusalem by the Roman armies was the signal for flight to the Judean Christians, so the assumption of power on the part of our nation in the decree enforcing the papal sabbath will be a warning to us. It will then be time to leave the large cities, preparatory to leaving the smaller ones for retired homes in secluded places among the mountains."

What will some people do as they have read this when that sign takes place? They will leave, won't they? Now I ask a very practical question. Where will they go? You don't need to answer that, but while we are this day in fasting and prayer for the church that's oppressed in various portions of the world, do you think we should be praying for the answer to the question I have just raised? It is a very practical problem.

Let's think of some of the things that those people are going to need. They are going to need to have places to go, and they are going to need to have something to do when they get there. They are going to need to have an experience in knowing where God wants them to go and what He wants them to do. In other studies I have laid upon your heart the responsibility of helping in whatever small way we can to provide places of refuge for such in that hour. And along with providing places of refuge, we need to ask God to prepare our hearts, because the problems of the hundreds and thousands that soon will need to pour forth from these cities will be much larger than we can begin to imagine.

It is only as we bring our barley loaves to Jesus and ask Him to multiply them that we will be able to feed the five thousand. We need to be getting an experience in faith and prayer and sacrifice and hard work and practical solving of problems right

now. Is that right? If we have to meet problems in long division tomorrow, it shouldn't surprise us if we have a few problems in short division today.

We know that part of the Sunday law that is coming is going to be a boycott (Revelation 13:16,17). "He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor to receive a mark? Where? In their right hand or in their foreheads. And no man can buy or sell, save he that has the mark. You and I know that God has told us to get out into the country and learn to grow our own provisions. We are to learn to raise fruit and vegetables so that we will have something to eat when the pressure is on in these cities.

I ask you again as I have asked you before, how many are you going to feed? Just you and your wife? Just you and your children? Or are you going to have something for somebody else? If we are going to feed and help and bless quite a number, then might it be in the providence of God to get into the habit of opening up our hearts and our homes and our tables to a number of people now? Do you see the providence of God in that?

Unless we have had some experience in it, it would take a lot of stretching for some people to make room for one person. They would be doing a wonderful thing to get stretched enough to make room for one. But bless the Lord, if in His providence we have gotten into the habit of stretching and stretching and stretching, then we can stretch a little more. Can't we? Or a big more. God help us to appreciate His providence to be able to stretch our homes, to stretch our budgets, to stretch the places at the table, to stretch everything that we have, and especially to stretch our hearts to take on the problems of others.

There is another phase to this. It is a very practical thing that I would like to have you look at. As we pray for the church in this hour of supreme need, and as we review the principles of religious liberty and look at the prophecies that are focused upon this hour, the last hour, the sunset hour, let's remember that, "the time is not far distant, when, like the early disciples, we shall be forced to seek a refuge in desolate and solitary places."

Is that even beyond a lovely, comfortable, country home? Oh, yes. When the Master finally comes, do you think He will find us in some comfortable country home sitting around the fireplace waiting for Him to come? Where does *Great Controversy* and *Early Writings* show we will be? We will either be in the dungeon or in the cave. We will either be in bondage or having fled for our lives out in the desolate and solitary places.

Do you see then the steps that people in these great cities must make? Very soon the last ones must leave the large cities preparatory to leaving the smaller ones for retired homes in secluded places among the mountains, and then on from there either to some dungeon or in the rocks or caves or the deserts. Probably without any home. *Early Writings* tells us plainly in the chapter on preparation for the time of trouble that houses and lands will be of no use to the saints in that final time of trouble. They will be taken from them.

You can see then that we are going deeper and deeper into problems. Harder and harder will be the road. It won't be smooth, it will be rough. It won't be down, it will be up. It won't be wide, it will be narrow. If that's so, do you see that sooner or later every soul is going to come to a place where if he goes ahead he will have to go ahead because he has an experience in knowing what God wants him to do?

We should value very greatly the counsel of our brethren at the present time, and we should appreciate so much the privilege of studying the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy. But do you think we will be able to carry all these books with us when we run for the caves? Do you think they will let us take these books with us when they put us in the dungeons? Will they allow us to call our brethren in for counsel before we go in before those tribunals? It is not guaranteed. Not at all.

So I would like to bring you to a very practical thing. Just as God is trying to get us ready physically for these temporal things, for these practical emergencies ahead, He is trying to get us ready spiritually to depend on Him to meet our problems.

I have here a little triangle. I asked Brother Jensen to make me this little triangle because I want to illustrate something. The place I would like to be tonight is right in the middle of it, and I will tell you what the three sides are.

The top side is God's side. God is above all. One side represents the convictions of my brethren as to what I ought to do and the place I ought to fill. The other side represents my own convictions. And when I can get in the middle of that triangle friends, that's the happiest place in all the world.

I would like to have you study that for a few moments as we deal with these practical problems. What is your work? Are you sure you are in the place where God wants you to be, doing the work that He wants you to do? Well, there are three sides to it. There is God's side, the side of your fellow workers, and your own convictions. If the work you are doing is right in the middle of that, you are a happy man. If that place you are filling is a place that represents what in your heart you believe to be the work that God has given you evidence of, and what your brethren feel is your work, that I say is a happy experience, and it's your privilege to seek for it.

There are some people who have one side of this triangle missing. Some may have all sides of it missing. Do you remember the time that Jonah had trying to get out of this triangle? The middle of the triangle for Jonah was Nineveh. He tried to go to Tarshish. He landed instead in a whale. Was he sorry? Did he pray about it? Did he ask God to help him out? Did God help him out? And since Jonah was so sorry, did the Lord finally tell Jonah to forget about that problem? No. As soon as Jonah got back on dry land, and thanked the Lord for getting him out of the whale, what did the Lord say to Jonah? "Arise and go to Nineveh and preach there the preaching that I bid thee."

Do you know what I find, friends? I find that sometimes people get into a problem, and then they get discouraged, and then they get sorry that they got

discouraged. They ask God to forgive them. If they have hurt others, they ask others to forgive them. Then they find that they are right up against the same problem where they were before, and they wonder what the matter is.

Why friends, it's very plain. It's all in God's leading. If in school you try to learn the multiplication table and you don't learn the sevens, and any problem that had sevens in it you always miss, what assignment will the teacher give you? Problems that have sevens. And you must not say, Oh, the teacher just picks on me. The teacher knows that's hard for me and I guess that's why. That's not picking on you. That's education.

I was reading where Sister White told about a certain brother who had been in the dark because he hadn't met certain problems. He had come back to God, and then had gone back into the experience again. Sister White told him she knew that he would be led over the same ground again. So brother or sister, if there is some problem that you have had in finding and staying in the center of God's will, remember that God in mercy is going to hold you right to that problem until you learn the lesson.

You say, But can't I have anything to say about what I do? Oh, yes. You have one side of it. You have something to say about what you do, and never forget it. God did not make you an automaton. He didn't make you a slave. Not at all. God never intended that you should be ordered about by others, unless you are a little child whose parents have to be your mind for you. God intends that you shall enter actively into the study and decision as to your work and your future. He wants you to. But remember, that's just one side of this triangle. You have a side, God has a side, your brethren have a side.

Somebody says, I don't know how to get all those three together.

A few hours ago these three sticks weren't together, but they are now. What happened? Somebody got them together. I ask Brother Jensen to, and he did it. If you and I are interested in getting these three sides of guidance together, God will help us to get them together. Yes He will. But if we are determined to have our own way about something, and we just hang on to this stick for dear life, and hope that God and our brethren will some day come around, we will wait in vain. Oh, let us believe with all our hearts that God wants us to have a part of knowing and fulfilling our place of duty. And equally so, He wants our brethren to have a part in it. And above all, God is guiding us and guiding our brethren to the end that we may fill the place of His choosing.

I want to read you something right on this point. This is a wonderful statement:

"If any are qualified for a higher position, the Lord will lay the burden, not alone on them, but on those who have tested them, who know their worth, and who can understandingly urge them forward" *Ministry of Healing*, page 477.

There it is friends. If God has something for me to do, He will not only lay the burden on me to move in that direction, He will lay the burden on some people who know me and can understandingly urge me forward. If I think that some of my brethren are slow in understanding what God wants me to do, let me pray for them. Let me pray for them, but let me not loose faith in God's overruling providence. What do you say?

Oh, what precious lessons there are in that triangle. I want to stay inside it. God over all. God impressing my brethren. God impressing me. My brethren have a part in it. I have a part in it. God has a part in it.

Through the ages the church of God has been burdened and harassed by those who are not willing to move along this line. In the early days of the message a group of disaffected ones drew off from the church, and were called The Messenger Party. They published a little paper called *The Messenger*. Like some of these sheets, I suppose, that are circulated today criticizing the church and its leadership.

I want to read you an interesting statement. This was written one hundred six years ago, back in 1855. The cause was young. I was interested in what the servant of the Lord said about these people and what it was that caused them to separate from the church.

"God's frown has been brought upon the church on account of individuals with corrupt hearts being in it. They have wanted to be foremost, when neither God nor their brethren placed them there" *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 1, page 122.

How much of the triangle did they have? Just one side. God wasn't interested in what they wanted. He wasn't placing them where they wanted to be. They wanted to be foremost, but God hadn't placed them there, and neither had their brethren. It finally led them to separate from the church.

Brethren, unless you and I can learn that lesson, it will eventually lead us to separate from the church. Just as certain as can be we are going into troublous times. The chaff will be sifted, separated from the wheat. The winds of persecution will blow through the thrashing floor of the church, and all who have not rounded out a good solid experience will be blown out.

God help us while we have the opportunity to press in and get this individual experience, this practical experience of knowing for ourselves what God wants us to do. Be happy in being in the place where He wants us, doing the work He wants us to do. There is a conviction which results from having these three sides of the triangle. My own personal conviction? Yes. The convictions of my brethren? Yes. God over all. Yes. And when you get those three together friends, you are in something that nothing can move.

From the standpoint of engineering, a triangle is just about the strongest way you can put things together. I leave these thoughts with you tonight as we enter into

this day of prayer and fasting, seeking God in behalf of His church oppressed in many lands, and here in this glorious country with its opportunity.

We started with 1 John 2:18, "Little children it is the last hour." Then we read Jesus' word in John 9:4, "I must work the works of Him that sent Me while it is day. The night cometh when no man can work." In closing we will read a text from Matthew:

"And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing idle, and saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle? They say unto him, Because no man has hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard; and whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive" Matthew 20:6,7.

Were they promised a stated wage? No. Were they assured that whatever was right they would receive? Yes. Did they get it? Were they happy over it?

Ah friends, it is the eleventh hour. It is the last hour, the final hour. The Lord of the vineyard is saying to everyone who is not yet fully engaged, "Go in to the vineyard, and whatever is right I will give you."

Could it be that there is somebody here tonight that is not employed full time working for Jesus? Years ago the Lord's messenger wrote that not more than one in a hundred among us is engaged in any more than common ordinary activities. Oh friends, it's too late in the day to be spending our time in ordinary things. Isn't it?

The world is perishing while Jesus is holding up His wounded hands before the Father as He gazes on the remnant that are not sealed. There is just one thing for a blood bought soul to do today, and that is to take the sickle and go to reaping. Gather in the sheaves before darkness falls when no man can work.

The sunset burns across the sky,
Upon the hour its warning cry

The curfew tolls from tower to tower;
Oh children, 'tis the last, last hour.

The work that centuries might have done
Must crowd the hour of setting sun,
And through all lands the saving name
Ye must in fervent haste proclaim.

The fields are white to harvest,
Weep, oh tardy workers, as ye reap;
For wasted hours that might have won
Rich harvest ere the set of sun.

We hear His footsteps on the way,
Oh, work while it is called today;

Constrained by love, imbued with power,
Oh, children in this last, last hour.

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