

Gather the Children

Sermon #0895

Study given by W. D. Frazee—September 7, 1962

The book of Joel is dealing especially with our time, the last hour. It is the time of the last great crisis. It is spoken of in the first, second, and third chapters as the day of the Lord. It is the great time of trouble that we are now on the threshold of. It is the time of the latter rain. It is our time. And in this time:

"It shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the Lord hath said, and in the remnant whom the Lord shall call" Joel 2:32.

You and I are interested in the remnant. It is the same that is pictured in Revelation chapter 17. It is to be a time of deliverance. And when we think of the time of trouble into which we are even now entering we will need deliverance. According to Ezekiel 9 everyone is going to either have the mark of deliverance or else he is going to be swept away in the awful destruction. Men with slaughter weapons are soon to unsheathe their swords, and there will be devastation over this earth that we have no idea of it. But there is going to be deliverance, thank God. In view of that time, God says:

"Blow the trumpet in Zion, . . . Gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, gather the children" Joel 2:16.

Children will need gathering.

"The Lord said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof. And to the others He said in mine hearing, Go ye after him through the city, and smite: let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity: Slay utterly old and young, both maids, and little children, and women: but come not near any man upon whom is the mark; and begin at My sanctuary" Ezekiel 9:4, 5.

In the great slaughter ahead children as well as grown folks must have the mark if they are to be spared. Deliverance depends upon having the mark. As we study what that mark means we might wonder how children could ever reach the place where they could in fullness have the mark that the saints will have at the close of probation. I would like to have us face that tonight in a very practical way.

Whenever probation closes, some children are going to be seven years old, some are going to be ten years old, and some will be twelve years old. That is a very solemn thought. It should be a very challenging thought. The world is full of the idea, sometimes among God's professed people, that children and youth will do sinful things, worldly things, foolish things, and by and by they will grow up and get some sense and settle down.

Have you ever heard such ideas? They are very prevalent. I suppose one reason those ideas are so prevalent is because that is what happens in so many cases. That is what has happened down through the ages.

There have been a few exceptions. John the Baptist didn't grow up on that program. He was filled with the Holy Ghost even from his mother's womb. Elisha didn't grow up on that program. There have been some others. And thank God, there are going to be some down here today.

I say to you dear parents, if the coming of Jesus is as near as the signs indicate, and as near as you and I hope it is, it is time to gather the children and get them under the mark, for the destroying angel is about to come.

The type of this takes us back to Egypt nearly fifteen hundred years before the Christian era. Israel was there as a race of slaves. The time came when there was to be deliverance, and a movement was launched by God to take His people from Egypt to Canaan. Moses was sent to lead out in that movement.

Before the deliverance was made effective God had to send plague after plague upon unresponsive Egypt. He had to send plague after plague to bring that haughty monarch and his counselors to their knees in submission to the God of the Hebrews. Water was turned to blood, flies and lice came, and many other plagues. When they wouldn't yield God said there is just one thing left to do.

I want you to think about the terrible weeping and wailing that is soon going to fill this world from east to west, north to south, as the awful plagues of God fall upon this world.

"And Moses said, Thus saith the Lord, About midnight will I go out into the midst of Egypt: And all the firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sitteth upon his throne, even unto the firstborn of the maidservant that is behind the mill; and all the firstborn of beasts. And there shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt, such as there was none like it, nor shall be like it any more. But against any of the children of Israel shall not a dog move his tongue, against man or beast: that ye may know how that the Lord doth put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel" Exodus 11:4-7.

God wanted everyone to understand that when the plagues were poured out, He had a plan for preserving and sparing His people. Down here today God has a plan. We read it in Ezekiel 9. A mark is to be put upon the foreheads of those that have a certain experience. They will be spared.

What was God's plan back there? Exodus 12:3 says they were to take a lamb. The sixth verse says they were to kill it. The seventh verse says they were to take the blood and strike it on the side posts of the door, and also on the lintel above the door.

"And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt" Exodus 12:13.

That was God's plan to save those children. Back there it was the firstborn. Down here it will be everyone. All the firstborn in Egypt were to be slain except those that were under the blood. Down here everyone, old and young, firstborn and everyone else, are going to be slain, except those who are under the mark. So we do well to study the type.

You and I understand that the blood represented Jesus. His precious blood was shed upon the cross that you and I might be saved. It is worth noting that back there it was not enough that the lamb should be slain. The blood must be applied to the door posts and the lintel. Down here today it is not enough that Jesus should have died upon the cross. His death was all sufficient as an offering, but it must be applied. It must be applied in every home and in every heart. Oh, I pray that every one of us may have that experience.

There was one other bit of instruction that came to the children of Israel, and I want you to notice it very carefully with all its implications:

"And ye shall take a bunch of hyssop, and dip it in the blood that is in the basin, and strike the lintel and the two side posts with the blood that is in the basin. And none of you shall go out at the door of his house until the morning" Exodus 12:22.

Where must everyone be in order to stay protected? Inside. That is the point.

Parents, if you had been living in Goshen in the land of Egypt, would your boy or your girl have been under your roof that night? Would they have been under the blood? The only way they could have been under the blood was to have been in the house. Thus God taught them a tremendous lesson.

You can see at once there are some tremendous lessons here for us, and we are not left to our human reasoning. God, by His Holy Spirit, has given us definite revelation on what this means:

"When God was about to smite the first-born of Egypt, He commanded the Israelites to gather their children from among the Egyptians into their own dwellings and strike their door posts with blood, that the destroying angel might see it and pass over their homes. It was the work of parents to gather in their children" *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 5, page 505.

I want to ask you something. If you were the Devil, what would you do about it? Do you suppose it was possible that there was some kind of party going on in some Egyptian's house that night, and that some of the young people from Goshen had been invited over?

Suppose some young person might have said, Oh daddy, I must go because it is going to be so interesting. They are expecting me, and I would hate to disappoint them.

Dear friends, the Devil has turned loose every sort of device and idea today to get our children away from the one place where God wants them, which is under the blood, under the sheltering roof of the parental home.

When God was about to smite the first-born of Egypt, He commanded the Israelites to gather their children from among the Egyptians into their own dwellings. Do you think they were off to the dance hall that night? Do you think they were off to the bowling alley that night? Do you think they were off to the skating rink that night? Do you think they were off to the theater that night to see the good movie that had been provided? Where were they? They were at home.

"It was the work of parents to gather in their children. This is your work, this is my work, and the work of every mother who believes the truth. The angel is to place a mark upon the forehead of all who are separated from sin and sinners, and the destroying angel will follow, to slay utterly both old and young" *Ibid*.

The angel that spread his wings of judgment over Egypt is about to fly again for everybody. So the message is to gather the children.

"The blood upon the lintel of the door symbolized the blood of Christ, who alone saved the first-born of the Hebrews from the curse. Any one of the children of the Hebrews who was found in an Egyptian habitation was destroyed" *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 6, page 195.

That would not have been a time to be going to an Egyptian school. Somebody says, "Moses went." Well, you know why Moses went, and you know when Moses went. And Moses wasn't attending a university class down at the university of Egypt that night, was he? No he wasn't. We are reaching the crisis hour of God's people, and the message is, Gather the children.

"Any one of the children of the Hebrews who was found in an Egyptian habitation was destroyed. This experience of the Israelites was written for the instruction of those who should live in the last days" *Ibid*.

I wonder where those people are? Are some of them right here tonight? Oh yes.

"Before the overflowing scourge shall come upon the dwellers of the earth, the Lord calls upon all who are Israelites indeed to prepare for that event. To parents He sends the warning cry: Gather your children into your own houses; gather them away from those who are disregarding the commandments of God, who are teaching and practicing evil. Get out of the large cities as fast as possible. Establish schools. Give your children the Word of God as the foundation of all their education" *Ibid*.

Gather the children in from the highways and hedges, in from the places of sin. Tenderly gather them in. And none of you shall go out of the door of his house until the morning. Oh friends, I long to see the morning break. But as long as the dark night of Egypt is on us, we better stay under the blood.

Notice that in these references I have read there are two applications talked about.

One is literally gathering our children into our own houses, separating them from the Egyptian influences around us.

The other application is establishing schools where the Bible is the basis of education, and where they will be free from Egyptian influences.

Those two things are spoken of as the application of gathering the children down here today. And fathers and mothers, the only way I can expect to meet the great Judge and have my child with me is to carry out that instruction.

They say a chain is only as strong as its weakest link, and a fence is only as good as its weakest point. Some cattle are adept at finding a weak point in a fence.

The story is told about a little boy who was listening with the deepest interest to the story of the lost sheep and the shepherd going out and finding it and bringing it back. When the father got through telling the story the little fellow said, "Well daddy, did they fix the hole in the fence?"

Tonight I would like to have you look with me at a possible weak place or two in the hedge about our children. We are to gather the children, but I think that wherever we gather them it ought to be strong enough to keep in the lambs and keep out the wolves. If it isn't, we may go to sleep and fool ourselves, and wake up in the morning with the children gone.

There are two holes I want to mention. The first is the connection between the home and the school. If the home is part of this place of refuge, and the school is part of this place of refuge, I say it is imperative that the home and the school be joined together in such a way that there is no weak point between them. Do you agree with me?

"Until the spirit of criticism and suspicion is banished from the heart, the Lord cannot do for the church that which He longs to do in opening the way for the establishment of schools" *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 6, page 202.

What I say might sound idealistic to you, but I believe we have come to the time when we ought to reach for and expect to reach God's highest ideal.

Do you know what ought to happen in our school this year? When every child who attends this school comes home, he should hear the same words, see the same standards uplifted. He should not hear in the school one word of criticism about the home he came from. Neither should he hear in the home one word of criticism about the school he is going to. Now if you want to help the Devil ruin the children, disregard what I have just said.

Let me read it to you in language far more authoritative than mine:

"Let not the conversation in your homes be poisoned with criticism of the Lord's workers. Parents who indulge this criticizing spirit are not bringing before their children that which will make them wise unto salvation" *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 7, page 183.

"When the youth are unwilling to submit to the discipline of the institution, or in any matter of difference with their superiors are determined to have their own way, let not parents blindly sustain and sympathize with their children.

"Better, far better might your children suffer, better lie in their graves, than be taught to treat lightly the principles that lie at the very foundation of loyalty to truth, to their fellow beings, and to God. Teach your children to respect and honor the ones to whom God has shown respect and honor by placing them in positions of trust" *Ibid*, page 185, 186.

In the light of that, brothers and sisters, it seems to me that if as parents we make the effort and sacrifice that is involved in placing our children under Christian teachers in a Christian school, we are certainly going to do everything we can to uphold the hands of those teachers. Never will our children hear one word of criticism. If we are going to have a school like God wants, it is going to be a lot stricter than the schools of Egypt.

Do you want that? I believe you do. Some of you have come a long way to get this. Let's get what we have come for. Let's not have it watered down with weak sentimentalism and tearing down discipline. Let us stand in the home and in the school for that blended love and firmness which properly reveals the character of God.

Shall we join together in that? Unless we do, we are not truly gathering the children. We are only gathering them into something where there are all kinds of loopholes; where the world can come in and the sheep be taken out. God help us to close every hole.

The other point I want to call your attention to as a possible weak point is in the home itself. When the Lord made children, in His wise providence He gave them two parents. He made a lot of problems when He did that. You know what I mean. There are a lot of problems involved.

If you are a father, it may be you wish you could run it your way. If you are a mother, you have thought at times that if you could make the decisions yourself it would be done right. But we have to face the fact that God has given children two parents.

Brothers and sisters, this is one of my greatest burdens at the present time. I see in the Bible and the *Testimonies* what can be in the blended lives of the father and mother. I see how vital it is to the salvation of the children. And as I think how we are right on the threshold of the coming of Jesus, I have a great burden in this matter.

I will read a reference on this point:

"The family firm must be well organized. Together the father and mother must consider their responsibility, and with a clear comprehension undertake their task. There is to be no variance. The father and mother should never in the presence of their children criticize each other's plans and judgments" *Adventist Home*, page 314.

When one of my teachers at the medical college read a sentence from the Spirit of Prophecy that had the word "never" in it, he used to say, "That's not very often, is it?"

Let me read that last sentence again:

"The father and mother should never in the presence of their children criticize each other's plans and judgments."

Some months ago I was talking with a young man who asked to counsel with me over a certain matter. There was one thing he said that sounded like music in my ears, and I have never forgotten it.

He said, "During all the years I was growing up I never once heard my father or mother criticize each other before us."

That is a wonderful thing. And I don't think it is some idealistic thing that cannot be reached, because all God's bidding are enabling. I say to every parent here tonight, it is something we have got to reach, and reach soon, if we are really going to have the children safe when the destroying angel comes through.

Now I read to you what to my mind is the most amazing and wonderful statement I have ever read. I just got hold of this recently. There is something very challenging about it, but also something very cheering and very thrilling, and very encouraging. I want you to listen as I read through and get to the last sentence. You need the early sentences to get the point, but the last sentence is the thrilling one:

"When the destroying angel was to pass through Egypt to destroy the firstborn, the command was to gather their children and families into their houses with them, and then mark their door posts with the blood, that the destroying angel might pass by their dwellings. If they failed to go through this process, there was no difference made between them and the Egyptians.

"The destroying angel is soon to go forth again, not to destroy the firstborn, but to slay both old and young, utterly men, women, and little children who have not the mark. Parents, if you wish to save your children, separate them from the world. Keep them from the company of wicked children, for if you suffer them to go with wicked children, you cannot prevent them from partaking of their wickedness and be corrupted. It is your solemn duty to watch over your children, to choose the society at all times for them. Teach your children to obey you. Then can they more easily obey the commands of God and yield to His requirements.

"Don't let us neglect to pray with and for our children. He who said, 'Suffer the little children, and forbid them not to come unto Me,' will listen to our prayers for them, and the seal or mark of believing parents will cover their children if they are trained up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" *Review*, March 28, 1893.

Friends, isn't that wonderful? Ah yes. I can see how when probation closes there are going to be children of all ages, from the little ones right on up who will share in that seal, that mark. Aren't you glad? Ah, what that home must be. Let's be sure the blood is on our hearts and our homes and our little school.

"Are all the children in? The night is falling
And storm clouds gather in a threatening way;

The lowing cattle seek a friendly shelter,
The bird flies to her nest;
The thunder crashes, wilder grows the tempest,
And darkness settles o'er the fearful din;
Come, shut the door and gather round the hearth stone,
Are all the children in?

Are all the children in? The night is falling,
When gilded sin doeth walk about the streets;
Oh, at the last it biteth like a serpent,
Poisoned or stolen sweets.
Oh, mothers guard the feet of inexperienced,
Too prone to wander in the paths of sin;
Oh, shut the door of love against temptation,
Are all the children in?

Are all the children in? The night is falling,
The night of death is hastening on apace;
The Lord is calling, enter now thy chamber,
And tarry apace.
And when He comes, the King in all His glory,
Who died the shameful death our hearts to win;
Oh, may the gates of heaven close about us
With all the children in."

God grant it friends. What will it be worth? It will be worth everything. That's what it is going to take. I pray God He will help each one to know where we fit into the picture. Everyone here is a parent or child, or someone who has influence with parents and children. As I face these things I hear the call to prayer. Blow the trumpet in Zion. Gather the children, and seek the Lord.

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