

Looking For and Hastening

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Study by W.D. Frazee—January 4, 1963

I am sure we are all looking for a special blessing. As we look back over the old year we have much to thank the Lord for. But in many ways the most important year of our lives may well be this coming year, 1963.

Those of you who are in touch with the news will remember that in recent days one of the things that has taken the headlines is coming over to Florida one thousand one hundred thirteen ransomed prisoners. Some months ago, in 1961, some of the Cuban people who were not satisfied with the communistic rule of Fidel Castro felt that the time had come to launch an invasion. I am sure none of us know all that entered into it, but at any rate they didn't get the support they thought they would.

The invasion was a disappointment, and hundreds were taken prisoners. Some suffered in the prisons in Cuba. One of the outstanding leaders of the invasion was held for a number of weeks in a little cell six by nine feet without any clothes and any opportunity to speak to anyone. Others suffered in various ways.

Meanwhile their friends and relatives in the United States were doing all they could to stir up sentiment to get them releases. There were some in Washington and New York that got interested in it, and finally a committee was set up and began to explore possibilities. It seemed that Fidel Castro was perfectly willing to trade the prisoners for some things he needed. Fifty-three million dollars in cash and material was gathered together to turn over to Fidel Castro so he would let these men come out of prison.

The day before Christmas they started arriving down in Florida. It was an occasion of tumult and rejoicing. The one who was to speak words of welcome walked up to the first airplane, but before he could get more than two words out of his mouth there was an expression of praise and thanksgiving. The prisoners stepped upon American soil and were quickly embraced and happy to be free.

I thought, "What a picture of homecoming. What a picture of those who are ransomed from this world being home in the city of God knowing they are safe." I thought of the ransom. Fifty-three million dollars is quite a bit of money. It would take a long time to count it dollar by dollar. But if somebody I love was one of those men, my father or brother, I would approve the cost. I would think it was worth it. And I wouldn't complain that too much was spent to get them.

There is something about love that has a great deal of effect upon values people put upon things.

Not only did Castro let these prisoners go, but he let some of the people who were not in jail go, if they would turn their property over to the government. At the time the prisoners were coming there were scores of these people who walked out with nothing.

One old woman who arrived said, "They took the coat off my back and the ring off my finger."

Do you suppose she would have stayed there to keep the ring? No. But I have heard of people who would miss heaven rather than give up a ring. It seems pitiful, doesn't it?

Another man said, "I turned the key in the lock of my thirty thousand dollar waterfront home, handed the key to the police, and went to the ship. I came without a penny in my pocket."

I don't know how much he was worth, but he had a \$30,000 home. I don't know how much he had in the bank, but he left it all.

Why on earth would a man do that? Why would a man leave a thirty thousand home, money in the bank, automobile, and come over here without a penny in his pocket? He must have been crazy.

No, you say, He had good sense. And isn't it amazing that millions of people here in America will applaud his actions? Yet if God should ask them for one tenth of that they would say, Oh, my, I couldn't afford that.

I rather think that if we are going to leave this world we are going to leave as much as that man left in Cuba. I rather think we will. And I don't think we will worry about it any more than he did. There was something that was moving him to get away from and go to. I wonder if there is something moving us.

I think of Dear Antonio from the mountains of Chiapas. Speaking in one of our large city churches he paused in his narrative of telling his work among the Indians in Chiapas, and looking at the people he said, "You folks don't want to go to heaven. You have everything here. But my people want to go to heaven."

I have been down there and seen how those people live. I know what he means. But I thank the Lord that it is possible for you and me, whether we live in huts in the mountains or waterfront mansions, to see a vision that is worth leaving everything for and going on a mission.

"The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things

shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God” 2 Peter 3:9-12.

Does that mean that you and I can hasten the coming of the Lord more quickly? Exactly so.

If we have power to hasten it, we also have power to delay it. I think we have had a part in demonstrating that. I have been meditating on this. While the beginning of each new year ought to give us a great deal of joy and thanksgiving that God lives, and we still live, it ought to bring a pain of sorrow to our hearts. Why? Because the disappointment of Christ is beyond description.

If you had been among those Cuban refugees down in Miami who had been waiting weeks and months for the arrival of their loved ones, you would have a little picture of what I mean. They waited a long time for their loved ones to come. Jesus has been waiting a long time for His loved ones to come. In this prison house of a world they are held, and Jesus longs for the homecoming. It isn't a lack of ransom. That has already been provided. But the prisoners of this world are not anxious to get out of this world as those prisoners in Cuba were to get out of jail.

I wonder if things are too easy and comfortable for us in this world. If we were stripped and kept in solitary confinement for several weeks we would probably long for heaven with a yearning desire that few of us have every experienced.

During the time when the plagues are falling there is going to come a time when a prayer comes from the church here in this world. Did you ever read it?

“And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to Him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe” Revelation 14:15.

Jesus is coming in answer to that prayer from His church. When we want Him to come, He will come and come quickly. But He is not coming to tare us away from our possessions. He is not coming to pull us away from our idols. He is not coming to urge reluctant feet aboard the space trip to the New Jerusalem. No, Christ is waiting with longing desire for you and me to want what He wants, to long what He longs for. That's reunion.

In the last prayer Jesus recorded in the Bible He said:

“Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am” John 17:24.

He wants us there. Jesus and the angels are looking with the deepest interest and the most intense longing for the day when the ransomed ones will come home.

Would you like to have Him come?

These words have been ringing in my ears. They were penned by Marjorie Louis Lloyd:

“I look about on the storm without,
That breaks 'ore a weary world;
And I think as I watch the winds that blow,
Tis time for the Master to come, I know.
I wish He would come tonight,

For the road is long, it has lost its song,
And its last dim lights burn low;
But I think of the Master's promise to come,
And I know that the waiting is almost done;
I wish He would come tonight.”

Would you like to have Jesus come tonight? Let's turn to the text that tells when He will come:

“And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come” Matthew 24:14.

When will the end come? When the work is done. When this Gospel of the kingdom has been preached, proclaimed, published, and witnessed in all the world, then shall the end come.

The end of what? Ah, that's what I would have you think about. The end of war. The end of famine. The end of sickness. The end of pain. The end of crime. The end of wretchedness. The end of disappointment. The end of everything that is unlively, and the beginning of everything that is desirable, never to end. All that is wrapped up in the expression, “and then shall the end come.”

As we go out in nature we see some tragedy every now and then. We see some little bird in pain. We see some creature in anguish. We witness the sad and futile searching of some mother for her baby that has been lost or taken. What does it all mean? Paul says:

“For we know that the whole creation groans and travails in pain together until now” Romans 8:22.

All nature is in pain. Millions of people are in pain. Millions of creatures are suffering in one way or another every moment and every hour of the day. It has been so for thousands of years. And there is no way to stop it except this verse we have read. Then, and not until then, shall the end come.

Well meaning people establish societies for the prevention of cruelty to animals. But friends, they have an endless task. Well meaning people establish

campaigns to try to put an end to war. Certainly we wish them well, but they have a futile job. There is only one answer to all problems. That is the coming of Jesus. Then shall the end come to all these things we would like to get rid of. There is no other answer.

But there is something far deeper and higher and wider and longer than all that. I will read what to me is the most sublime statement in all the fifty volumes of the Spirit of Prophecy:

“Those who think of the result of hastening or hindering the gospel think of it in relation to themselves and to the world. Few think of its relation to God. Few give thought to the suffering that sin has caused our Creator. All heaven suffered in Christ's agony; but that suffering did not begin or end with His manifestation in humanity. The cross is a revelation to our dull senses of the pain that, from its very inception, sin has brought to the heart of God. Every departure from the right, every deed of cruelty, every failure of humanity to reach His ideal, brings grief to Him” *Education*, page 263.

What a vista that opens up. What a vast panorama of sorrow and pain that began when sin began, and can never stop until sin is stopped. When the first sin was committed the pain of it reached the heart of God, and stabbed Him as with a sword—a sword that killed and yet He must keep on living. Infinite love must bear the sorrow and pain and shame and agony and woe of year after year, generation after generation, age after age of sin and its sad results. And Jesus hung upon a wooden cross for six hours to help you and me to see something of what He and His Father had suffered and would suffer for six thousand years. The pain didn't start when they drove the nails through His hands, and it didn't stop when they put Him in the tomb. It started before the foundation of the world. That's why He is the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world (Revelation 13:8).

Few think about it. Few understand what sin has cost God and is costing God. Therefore few realize what the end of it is going to mean to Him. Oh, what a wonderful relief from pain and agony awaits God when the last sin has been blotted out, and the last evidence of sin has been removed from this universe. The banished are all brought home and the universe is in peace and love again.

Did you ever stand or kneel by the bedside of someone you loved that was in pain? How did you feel? You suffered too, didn't you? And if you will tell me how much you loved the suffering one, I will tell you how much you suffered. If you loved them a little, you suffered little. If you loved them a great deal, you suffered a great deal. Listen:

“Christ feels the woes of every sufferer. When evil spirits rend a human frame, Christ feels the curse. When fever is burning up the life current, He feels the agony” *The Desire of Ages*, page 823.

As I read that I hear the cry of twenty-five years ago. Yes, for nearly a quarter of a century there comes echoing down the halls of memory the cry I heard in the great charity hospital in New Orleans. There were scores of patients there. And as I walked down the hall I heard the cry, "Oh Allie, come and get me out of this place."

I have never forgotten that cry. I don't know what was the matter with that poor man. I don't know what he hoped to accomplish by being taken out. I just know it was a cry of agony such as I can never forget. And any who have ministered long to the sick have deeply impressed upon the brain cells experiences of pain and woe and anguish and agony that God in His providence permits to come to us that we may catch just a little glimpse of what He is seeing and feeling and suffering all the time.

I say to you, friends, these things will either make us calloused or tender. We will either become hardhearted or merciful and tenderhearted with deep feeling.

"As the `whole creation groans and travails in pain together' (Romans 8:26,22), the heart of the infinite Father is pained in sympathy. Our world is a vast lazar house, a scene of misery that we dare not allow even our thoughts to dwell upon. Did we realize it as it is, the burden would be too terrible. Yet God feels it all. In order to destroy sin and its results He gave His best Beloved, and He has put it in our power, through co-operation with Him, to bring this scene of misery to an end" *Education*, pages 263-264.

Can it be true? That's what it says. He has put it in our power, through co-operation with Him, to bring this scene of misery to an end. Is that why you were born? Yes. Is that why we are here tonight? Yes. This is the meaning of life, dear friends.

So many are busy with anything and everything except the one thing that will get the prisoners home and put an end to it all. If I were languishing in prison I would think that instead of getting me out of prison people were using excuses to say that the things they were doing were not bad things. So many things are going on in the world today that if the Holy Spirit begins to touch them some sensitive heart cries out, I don't see anything wrong with that. I don't see why I shouldn't take this course or carry out this career, and do this and that and the other thing. I can't see what is wrong with that amusement, or this book.

Well, if somebody you loved were in prison, and you had the opportunity of ransoming them, some of those things would lose their appeal so fast.

Of course, it isn't anybody we know or love very well that is in that position. That's the tragedy of it. Our best friend is on the cross. He gave everything to ransom us. But we will need to give a little something to ransom Him. Two thousand years ago they sneered at Him and asked Him why He didn't come down from the cross.

There are those today who, if they even got a glimpse of what we are studying would say, Why should He worry. He has everything.

They don't understand. But you and I understand a little, don't we? I will tell you how we can understand it more. Start doing something about it. There is only one passion for a blood-bought soul. That is the passion to bring to an end the suffering of Jesus Christ; to bring to an end the pain that is tearing at His heart. That is the only thing to live for.

Some of you can remember when the Lindbergh baby was kidnapped. What did Lindbergh do? He got into that airplane and went up and down, back and forth, following every possible clue. It was painful. I wonder if anybody had to labor with him to give up certain extravagances during that time? There was just one thing he lived for.

Somebody says, "But I wouldn't want to live like that."

Do you mean to say you will pass by on the other side? Do you mean to say you will close your eyes to Calvary? Will you close your ears to the pain and agony and anguish of this world? Do you mean you will join the godless world and say, Let us eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die, and who cares what happens to earth's three billion souls?

You can have one experience or the other, but you can't have both.

We are rapidly approaching the hour when there will be no middle class. Every soul will be heart to heart with Jesus in this yearning desire to put an end to all this tragedy, or else they will be beyond the reach of either man or God.

What can we do about it? The first thing we can do is give up sin. Instead of arguing with God when He talks to us about something, we just put it down fast. Give up sin. That's what is hurting God. Why not give it up? I can't control what other people do about hurting God, but I can control what I do, can't I? And believe me, if He loves me as much as He says He does, just one soul to quit sinning would bring Him comfort. There is joy in heaven over one sinner that repents. Let's take some new steps in getting away from sin and getting close to Him.

How about the way we keep the Sabbath? Could we please God with being more careful about the edges of the Sabbath? See if there are some new steps He would like to have us take. What about our diet. We cannot please Him by mere mortification of the flesh. We won't add anything to His joy or detract anything from His pain by bringing pain or malnutrition to ourselves. We need caution, but some of us need a word of encouragement to control our appetite and get closer to God's ideal on the matter of diet.

These things are personal matters that must be settled between the soul and Christ. But once we get the background we will be anxious to come close to the Savior.

What about our personal devotion and family worship? Is there a family who is not having the family altar? Fathers and mothers, husbands and wives, parents and children, are you praying together? Are you learning to solve problems on your knees instead of just talking or thinking? The mercy seat is the place to come to find mercy. That's what we need.

What about dress? As the world is getting more immodest would it be a good thing for God's children to get more modest? Or shall we follow the world even if we follow a few inches behind the world?

Oh, this view of what is holding up things will help us with many details. We can't settle it for other people. We can't control how other people wear their hair, but we do control how we wear ours. And if we think of Jesus on the cross and Jesus in the sanctuary holding up His wounded hands as He bears the weight of the sins of the world, we will want to be dressed from head to foot in a way that will represent Him instead of Paris or Hollywood.

It grieves me when I see how the fashions of this world have made their inroads among the saints of God. It grieves me to see how readily we echo and reflect the world. How quick the trends introduced by the world find their way in. It ought not to be so. The bride of Christ needs no help from the beauty shops of this world to get ready for her Bridegroom. The children of God need no help from the stylists of this world to appear in the court of heaven.

Such thoughts will not lead us to be slovenly or untidy or careless. Far from it. A million miles from it. Jesus is ready to teach us individually how to take new steps away from the world and toward heaven. On our knees is the place to find the answer.

I think of those Cuban refugees. I think of that man who left his thirty thousand dollar home and came without a penny. But he was happy to get away. I am wondering if there are any tests that God would like to bring to any of us in the matter of our money, our property, our possessions. I wonder if we have everything on the altar to be used as He shall direct. I wonder if there are any steps of carefulness in tithe or offerings, or use of our funds that God wants to talk to us about. I wonder if there is any money that is being spent for things we could get along without if we knew the money would get Jesus out of pain. Is there a way to turn our money into ransom? Oh, yes. "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come." This view of life will teach us to use our money carefully, and not waste a nickel of it. All of it can be used as ransom funds to help bring the end more quickly.

Besides giving ourselves we should devote our lives to win others. Effectual soul winning is something that cannot be done as a hobby. It must be a life burden and a life passion. The One who knows has told us that the lives of too many are too easy on themselves. When Jesus came to this world there was one thing that drove Him—to win souls.

I would like to ask you to put your life into soul winning. Not for an occasional afternoon, but for every day in the week, and every day in the year. For some of you

it will mean to deliberately dash your dreams. Some of you may have had dreams of some career or some plans you wanted to carry out and in which you thought you could be a good Christian and still do this thing. But as you see what the real meaning of life is you see that the Lord would like to have you devote your life in helping Him get all the souls gathered in as fast as possible. As soon as it is done He is coming, and it will be the end of all the earth's woe and misery.

Will you devote your life to soul winning? If you will, I would like to have you be very concrete and practical. I would have you ask God to give you some souls to pray for. Not just in a general way, but in a very earnest way.

The other day I had an experience. I had been praying for a man for several years, and had been trying to get in touch with him with no success. I kept praying for him hundreds and thousands of times.

The other day I got a Christmas card from him. He said, "The year I spent in your home I will never forget. It was the happiest time in my life. Keep on praying for me."

Do you think that helped me to keep on praying? When the unsundered soul urges us to keep praying, God wants to encourage us to keep on praying. So I ask you to make a prayer list of one or two or three, or how many souls you can carry. Don't make it so long you get wearied with it and it ceases to lose its meaning. Have a little prayer band with someone else. I can guarantee that if you will do those things you can help bring an end to all this tragedy.

The Savior's promise is clear:

"Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of My Father which is in heaven" Matthew 18:19.

Echoing that we have the words of the Lord's messenger:

"Why do not believers feel a more earnest concern for those who are out of Christ? Why do not two or three meet together and plead with God for the salvation of some special one, and then for still another?"
Testimonies for the Church, Vol. 7, page 21.

And the echo of that question rings down these isles and through these rows of seats tonight. Why indeed should we not do it? It is so simple.

I know all can't give Bible studies, but you who can be up and at it.

I know all can't preach, but you who can be up and at it.

But there is something I know that every one of you can do. You can have a prayer band and begin to pray every day for one or two or three, or half a dozen

souls that God has laid upon your heart. You can put that list down before God and plead with Him over those souls.

Every one of you can do that. And as you work and pray in Christ's name, Jesus says your prayer will be answered and the numbers will increase.

Ah friends, I have given you the simplest thing in soul winning. It is the heart and core of evangelism. Shall we do something about it for His sake?

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