

Square Peg in a Round Hole

Sermon #0944
1963

Study given by W. D. Frazee—August 30,

Not long ago a friend was visiting here at Wildwood, and during the course of our conversation he gave evidence he had thought at various times about coming here and having a part in the work, and he was still thinking about it.

But then he said, "Brother Frazee, I am afraid, and I have been afraid at various times as I thought about coming here, that if I came you would find I was a square peg trying to fit into a round hole."

The Lord gave me the answer for him. I want to share it with you tonight.

We have a lathe here. I am wondering if any of us have come in contact with it. I hope so, because we all need to be worked over on the lathe. What do you think about it? Do you agree with me? Are you willing to be put on the lathe? I hope so, because unless we are, we will not get the help the Lord wants us to have.

You know what a lathe does, don't you? It can change square pieces of wood into round pieces of wood so they can fit into the hole. You know what has to happen to the wood. It has to be cut.

Have you ever been cut? I expect you have. What is it for? My dear friends, it is to make us fit.

Paul speaks in his wonderful letter to the Ephesians about the whole building fitly framed together grows into a temple for the Lord. But believe me, it takes some cutting and some planing to fit together the different pieces in the church of God.

Are you willing to be cut? Are you willing to be planed? Are you willing to be polished? Are you willing to go on the lathe? No longer to be all corners, but fit in as smooth and nice as can be?

Ministry of Healing, page 499, tells about some people who wish to prove an exact fit without the trouble of adaptation or training. I suppose if this piece of wood could think and talk it might suggest that what is needed is to make this hole square. I presume it could be done.

The question is, which one is going to change? Are you going to change, or is God going to change? Are you going to change, or are all your brothers and sisters in the church, the community, or the institution going to change? Must the program be changed to fit your particular personality, or are you willing to have some of the corners knocked off? What do you say? Well, it is probably not hard to say it here in meeting.

There are two things I would like to have us think about. One is to think about getting so we can endure it. The second is coming to the place where we actually seek for it.

We say he asked for it. Well, I mean something a little different when I talk about asking for it. Do you think we should ask to go on the lathe?

It would be a shame if all we accomplished through a year or a quarter of classes would be merely an accumulation of further information in our heads. This is not that kind of education. This is a training that deals primarily with taking square, peculiar, personalities and making of them characters that can fit into the world's needs. Shall we do it? Shall we endure the necessary discipline? And shall we come to the point of not merely enduring it, but seeking for it?

I have said, it is easier to say it than it is to go to the lathe. But I will tell you something that is harder than taking classes.

We will get a certain amount of lathe work done in our classes. For instance, Dr. Sharpenburg is going to give us a class in nutrition. If we are willing to be cut, we will have some ideas cut away from us. Of course, if I am so sure that every idea I have in my head in nutrition is correct, and that I don't want any change, it is possible that even Dr. Sharpenburg's lathe wouldn't cut a single corner off of me. That could happen. There are substances so hard that even if you put them on the lathe they could boast you didn't change them a bit.

I suggest that if there are any of us who already know about nutrition, we shouldn't come and take his course. I think we ought to give our seat to somebody who needs to go on the lathe, and knows it. What do you say? I could say the same thing about every one of our classes.

Oh, dear friends, God help us to understand that the biggest reason God has us here is to change us; to cut loose from us these square corners that make it hard for us to fit into God's plans.

But as I say, there is something harder than these classes. That is the lathe of the day by day mingling with our fellow workers in the sanitarium, on the farm, in the home, out in missionary work, in every experience of life. When things get on the lathe, is it possible for the lathe to run fast enough and things to happen fast enough that something gets hot? It can happen.

I have seen evidence sometimes of people getting hot under the collar. Friction produces heat. But it is hard to get worked on the lathe without friction. If you have even the ghost of the idea that you could get ready for heaven if you could get into a place where there was no friction, I tell you that is a hallucination or a delusion. That is really an effort of the enemy to make us miss our opportunities.

When Adam and Eve were in Eden, that was a good place for them to be as long as they were like God. But as soon as they sinned and fell and lost their holy nature, it was necessary for them to leave Eden and go out where the thorns and

brambles and thistles and hard work and difficulties and trials were. And that was given them not as a punishment in the sense of vengeance. It was given them because God saw that Eden no longer furnished the conditions necessary for the development of character. They needed to go on the lathe.

Adam was on the lathe for over nine hundred years. It took a lot. Thank God he is going to be there in the kingdom of God, and he is going to be ready. Do you remember that wonderful picture in *Great Controversy* of the meeting of the two Adams. Yes. Adam is going to be back to his Edenic perfection. Adam and Eve were put on the lathe. You and I need to get on that lathe.

I mentioned it is a good thing to get to the place where we seek the lathe. Sister White tells about how in the 1844 movement when they were looking for the Lord to come, they were so anxious to be right that when they would meet together, one would say, "Brothers, Sisters, have you seen anything in me that is not right? I know I am often blind in my own faults, and I am anxious to get ready for Jesus' coming. Will you tell me?"

Those people were anxious to get on the lathe, weren't they? Of course, if you and I knew Jesus was coming next fall, we probably would go around and ask people to point out our faults. Wouldn't we? But since He may not come for a long, long time we skip that. Is that it?

Ah, dear ones. Is His coming closer now than it was then? Let's go for the lathe. Shall we? Let's ask for it. Let's ask our brothers and sisters, the ones we think can help us, and honestly and frankly and sincerely seek to get their help in getting cut and changed; getting things taken out of our lives we need to get changed.

Sometimes as I get to thinking about this I could cry if it would do any good, because I see people who have such great talent and such wonderful possibilities, and yet along with it they have some things that have got to come out or they will never be used in any great way. I wonder how long it is going to take?

Well, we must not hurt them, so we will just put them up here on the shelf. We put them on the shelf and a week goes by, a month goes by, a year goes by, and we have a committee, and it says, Well, I don't know if they have made any improvement or not.

How long would that stick of wood have to sit there in order for time to make a change in it? Would time ever do it? No. Time will never finish what has not begun. Sitting on a shelf will never change a square stick into a round peg. No.

How are we going to get where we can fit? We have to be cut, and somebody has to cut us. That brings me to the next point. Are you willing to be a part of the lathe? Somebody is going to get a vision of something tonight that is going to completely change their attitude on certain matters. You will see what I mean. There are some things that could happen tonight that would bring a reform greater than any matter of quitting some article of diet or changing some article of dress. There is a reform that is tremendous. It is involved in your being a part of the lathe.

"Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother" Matthew 18:15.

What did you do? Well, you got some corners knocked off.

"But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established" Matthew 18:16.

What for? Well, he needs a heavier lathe. He is harder to work on.

"And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican. Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" Matthew 18:17-18.

Those are the three steps. One, two three. They are very simple. Is there anyone here who does not understand what they say? I think not. I think the words are very easy to be understood. I was very much impressed with an article in the recent *Review and Herald* of August 22 on the front page, *Have Peace One With Another*, by Ellen G. White. How many of you saw it? That's good. I hope all the rest of you will see it and read it over and over.

It is a reprint from an article the messenger of the Lord wrote for the *Review and Herald*. There were not many of us alive then, were there? So Sister White didn't write it with your name on it, but the Spirit of God inspired it with my name on it, and your name too. And I think it is wonderful that the Lord impressed the editors to put it in this recent *Review and Herald*. I think it has come right when we need it. I think it is meat in due season.

If I were suggesting another name for this article, I would say, How To Use The Lathe. And remember, the question I am working on is, Are you willing to be a part of the lathe? I trust you all agreed in the first part of our study that we need to be willing to be lathed, willing to be cut, willing to be shaped up, willing to change from sharp corners into round characters that are not cutting and jabbing and hurting people all the time. Are we willing to be a part of the lathe? Listen:

"When difficulties arise in the church, special study should be given to the word of God with earnest prayer to learn what course Christ would pursue to settle the matter. It is a common practice for church members to discuss the faults of the erring among themselves while the one at fault is not visited, and no special effort is made to redeem him" *Review and Herald*, April 15, 1880.

Do you suppose this is more or less common than eating between meals? I will venture my estimate of it. It is more common. It is a thing that is more common than meat eating. And I could list a lot of other things. This says it is a common practice for church members to discuss the faults of the erring among themselves. You say, Sure, we are burdened.

Well, we are seeking to learn how to use the lathe. Wouldn't it be a strange thing to go into a shop and see the lathe running and nothing in it? You go in there day after day and hear it whirring, but nothing coming out that has been shaped? What is the matter? No material in it.

And when you hear tongues whirring and cutting, and the person they are talking about isn't there, how much is being accomplished? Wouldn't the first step in learning to use the lathe be that the material to be worked on has to be in the lathe? Suppose we settle that right here tonight, and the next time the lips are about to open and the tongue about to start cutting, suppose that with the help of the Spirit of God we have so drilled our minds that we say, Wait a minute. Is Brother Jones here? Oh, no. He isn't here. Of course we wouldn't say this if he were here. Well certainly we had better not say it if he is not here, because he is the one we are trying to help.

"Our Redeemer understood the diversity of human nature, and in order to save the souls for whom He sacrificed His life and establish His church in unity and prosperity upon the earth, He has given explicit rules for church members to follow in dealing with one another. Hear what He says. `Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.'" *Ibid.*

Now comes something I am so glad God had His messenger to write down:

"It is no pleasant task to do this" *Ibid.*

Well, I knew it wasn't, but I am so glad inspiration has recognized it. There are some pleasant tasks, but there are some tasks that are not pleasant. All the tasks that nurses have to do are not pleasant. Well, when I get to be a nurse, I am just going to do the pleasant ones. Who is going to do the unpleasant ones? Somebody else who can do it better and does not bother them so much because they are used to it.

"Although it is no pleasant task to go to the one supposed to be in error and tell him his fault between you and him alone, it is the very work Christ has given us to do to save

the erring and preserve the harmony of the church. It is much more gratifying to human nature to tell our suspicions to our brethren than to go to him frankly and say the same things we would say were he not present. The church needs faithful, heroic men who will dare to be right and true, and who will follow the Bible to the letter, refusing to submit to the forms and practices of this corrupt age" *Ibid*.

This would make a sweeping reformation in the lives of many of us to do this. Shall we do it? I have been wondering which would be better, to keep on eating the flesh of dead animals or eating the flesh of live brethren. I wonder which would be more important, to quit eating animal flesh or to quit eating human flesh. If you think that is extreme, read what the book *Education* says about the cannibals, and about criticizing and finding fault with our brothers and sisters.

Wouldn't it be a wonderful thing to know that if you made a mistake, the first man would say anything about it would be the man who would come to you? Are any of you sure that is so regarding yourself? Are there any of you who are sure you could make a mistake on this campus, and you were sure nobody would say anything about it until they came and talked to you about it?

We are not quite so secure, are we? As the result of failing to follow this counsel many of us are left in the position where we imagine people are talking things around. They are not, but we are not sure. I can tell you something. I could make a mistake at home that my wife knew about, and if I knew she was the only one who knew, I would be perfectly safe to walk around this campus and be sure not a one of you would know anything about it. I have thirty years of experience to prove that, and it is a comfortable feeling.

I wonder why I feel safe about what my wife knows that the rest of you don't know? She loves me. If the rest of you loved me as much as she does, I would be just as safe with the rest of you as I am with her. That's right. I am glad that along with love that hides a multitude of sins from others, she has love enough to tell me about them. That's what she ought to do, isn't it? That's right.

I wonder if some of the rest of you love me enough to do that too? I think if we had more of the first kind of love we would have more of the second. I think if we will have more of the love that hides the mistakes of our brethren from others, in the same spirit we will have the love that goes to them and talks to them personally about the problem.

In each case what are we trying to do? Save the reputation of the individual, save the honor of God and the church, and help that individual get ready for heaven.

Oh friends, how simple God's plans are, and how beautiful they are. Let's do them. What do you say? Let's go on the lathe, and let's learn how to use the lathe on other people. If we will do this it will work nine times out of ten. That's a pretty good average.

By the law of averages, if you tried once and it didn't work and you quit, what a shame to have missed it. One great reason why our brethren and sisters have no more confidence toward God in prayer is that they neglect to follow the words of Jesus. They allow various wrongs to exist with members of the church which create bitter envy and strife.

While these differences exist, God neither hears nor answers their prayers, and darkness comes over the mind because they have neglected the duties so plainly pointed out by our Redeemer. Jesus gave rules which would prove a success if they were obeyed.

When you are cutting pipe and running threads on the pipe, you have a compound that you put on. It is cutting oil. Let me tell you, the only safe way to use the lathe would be to put the cutting oil on. Put plenty of it on to reduce the friction and heat. Now you cannot get rid of all the heat no matter how much oil you put on. I read that it is a difficult job. But put on the oil.

What is the oil? It is love. That is what it is. We need to get down and pray for it. I wonder how many of us need it? I wonder how many of us need work done on us? I wonder how many of us are fitted for heaven, ready to go if the chariot should come? Why, if we would get up there, we would be such misfits. But there isn't any lathe in heaven. If we will ever get fitted up, we will get fitted up here.

The shop is about to close. Quitting time is long overdue. But God has kept the shop open because the work isn't done yet. Let's hurry. Oh, let's hurry and be willing to be worked on, and willing to work on others in harmony with God's directions.

Lord, rightly interpret to our hearts, and apply to our hearts what we have studied from Thy book. Make us glad and willing to simply do what Jesus has said. We know you will bring a wonderful revival as a result. And we thank Thee in Jesus' name who died for us. Amen.

Copyright 2019. All rights reserved.

W.D. Frazee Sermons
PO Box 129, Wildwood, GA 30757
1-800-WDF-1840 / 706-820-9755
www.WDFsermons.org
support@WDFsermons.org