

Finding My Special Place

#0860

Study given by W.D. Frazee—November 9, 1962

"For the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch" Mark 13:34.

Phillips translates it, "He has given each one his work to do." The New English Bible says, "Each with his own work to do." The thought in all the translations is that there is a special work for each one of us personally. That is what I would like to study with you tonight.

"Not more surely is the place prepared for us in the heavenly mansions than is the special place designated on earth where we are to work for God" *Christ's Object Lessons*, page 327.

That is a very challenging statement. A thrilling statement as you begin to think of its implications. Is there really a special place for each person here tonight? That is what it says. That is what is involved in this text I have read. He has given each his own work to do.

When God led His people out of Egypt He arranged for them to be marshaled not only in tribes, but in companies of thousands, hundreds, fifties, and on down to tens. Different tribes had various responsibilities. There were three families among the Levities who had a certain job. One group had charge of the sanctuary building. Another group had to do with the furniture. And neither one was to do the work of the other.

We are told by inspiration that if a man wandered over and started to participate in the work that belonged to another group, death would have been the result. That seems rather hard, doesn't it? But God was seeking to impress the Israelites that every man has a particular place, a specific job.

The setting is a somber one, but I would like you to think of the glad side of it. Aren't you glad you have a place? Suppose when we go to heaven we are there for several hours and began to wonder just where we are to be located. This is, of course, unreal, but you will get the thought. I go up to Jesus and say, Where is my mansion? Suppose He should say, Oh, that's right. You will need to be located, won't you. Gabriel, do we have an empty room anywhere? And Gabriel should say, Yes, I think we could put him in number 117 of the apartment house down on 350th avenue. So Gabriel calls one of his helpers and I am taken down there.

Is that the way it is going to be? No. Nothing like that. And I have pictured it merely to show what isn't going to be. How do I know it isn't going to be that way? Because in John 14:2 Jesus says, "I go to prepare a place for you." Yes. When I get there my blessed Lord will take me down to the particular location He has picked out for me and show me a gem of beauty. And I will clap my hands and say, Oh Lord, this is wonderful. It will be prepared for me, friends. And it will be a special place. Nothing like it. You will all want to see it. If you would miss seeing it, you would miss seeing something special.

There is one going to be there for you too. And it is not going to be like mine, because you are harder to please on some points than I am. And Jesus is taking all that into account as He prepares your place and my place. Well, not more surely is the place prepared for us in the heavenly mansions than is the special place designated here on earth where we are to work for God. But do you know, ninety-nine out of a hundred people who walk this earth go through life without ever finding that special place or getting the thrill of it?

To me that is one of the great tragedies of life. It doesn't need to be. Every soul who is willing can have the joy of knowing that he is in the special place designated by God, prepared by God, and planned by God for him in this life. If you can think of anything more wonderful than that I wish you would tell me about it. But I know you can't. I know that is the greatest satisfaction of life.

When a man has that satisfaction, there is nothing can tempt him away from it. Any money you might offer he would laugh at. Any thought that he could be promoted to something higher he would smile at. How could you be promoted to anything higher than the place where God planned for you to fill? You couldn't get any higher than that.

You could get a lot lower. That was the problem with Lucifer. He thought he could get higher than God had planned. But every step he took was a lower one, and he is falling yet. It isn't finished. He is going to fall clear to destruction. Oh, what a sad thing. We can learn a lesson from it.

I would like to have us study about how we can find our place. And Jesus is ready to help us. There are two arms with which God reaches down to guide us to the place of His choosing. With one He guides directly through our own minds. With the other He guides us through other human beings.

In matters of personal duty we are largely dependent, and should be largely dependent upon the individual guidance of God. If any of you lack wisdom let him go to the priest? Go to the Bishop? To the Pope? No. Let him do what? Let him "ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally" James 1:5. And we are given an inspired comment on that:

"But we are not to place the responsibility of our duty upon others, and wait for them to tell us what to do. We cannot depend for counsel upon humanity. The Lord will teach us our duty just as willingly as He will teach somebody else"
The Desire of Ages, page 668.

That is quite clear, isn't it? And if that was the only statement in the writings of inspiration on the subject, we might conclude that all we need to do in knowing our duty is to pray and study the Scriptures. Then individually come to our personal conclusions and carry those conclusions out. That is so about some matters. There are some personal matters in which God wants to guide you personally, and no human being can come between you and God. No human being should come between you and God. On some of those matters God has plainly told us that He is not interested in working through other minds to reach us.

"Place your mind and will where the Holy Spirit can reach them, for He will not work through another man's conscience to reach yours. With earnest prayer for wisdom, make the Word of God your study. Take counsel of sanctified reason, surrendered wholly to God"

Testimonies for the Church, Vol. 7, page 214.

That is clear, isn't it? He will not work through another man's conscience to reach yours. I wonder if I should add that those who get the most inspiration out of that probably need it the least. Our human natures are interesting things. Some of us are inclined to gather up every reference that will support us in independent thinking and independent action. And here is a fine one to add to such a collection.

But the folks who collect those references need to collect the other references. I am going to read some of them presently.

There are those who find it very easy to let other people decide things for them. They look to other people to tell them what is right and what is wrong; what they ought to do and what they shouldn't do. This indicates that in some matters the only way we can know what God wants us to do is to go to God for ourselves individually. But having emphasized the importance of personal guidance from God in helping us find our place, I want to come to the other half of this beautiful whole. There are some matters, dear friends, that if the will of God reaches us, it will reach us through the counsel of our brethren.

Years ago a book was gotten out called *Gospel Workers*. We have a newer book called *Gospel Workers* now, but this was published back in 1893. On page 459 occurs this statement. I have taken this particular statement because of the way it is worded. You will see that if God is going to help you find your place, He is going to have some other people:

"If any are qualified for high positions of trust, the Lord will lay the burden not on them but on those who have tested them, and can understandingly urge them forward" *Gospel Workers* page 459.

Here is a man. The Lord has a place for him. How is that man going to find it out? Is the Lord going to lay the burden on him? This says no. Who is the Lord going to lay the burden on? On those who have tested him. But I am afraid my brethren don't understand me. I am afraid the Lord doesn't have access to their

minds. The Lord has given me a great burden to do a certain work, and I am not sure I ought to wait until the Lord lays the burden upon them about what I ought to do.

That other statement indicates I am going to go directly to God to learn my duty. There must be some way to get these together, friends. And there is. They work beautifully when we work them together. Like our dear Bible teacher at Loma Linda used to say about those two texts in Galatians. One says to bear one another's burden and so fulfill the law of Christ. And the same says every man shall bear his own burden. He said, "That sounds like a contradiction, but it isn't. If you will work both texts you will find they work fine together."

That is the way with this. If you and I will seriously take both these principles that God wants to guide us individually, and He is also going to guide our brethren to help us know what place God wants us to fill, we will find they work fine together.

Having read this from *Old Gospel Workers*, I want to share with you something that puts both these statements together:

"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.

It is almost like that in *Gospel Workers*, isn't it? But there is a little expression that the servant of the Lord was inspired to put in there. The first statement was inspired. This one is inspired. Like different statements in the Bible, each one sheds light on the other.

Putting those together I will say, The happy man is the man who is in the place he believes God has put him, and his brethren believe God has put him. That's it. And may I say to you, you can't get anything richer than that. Don't settle for any less. You don't need to. You can have that double assurance--the assurance of your own heart and the assurance of the call of your brethren. Don't settle for any less.

You may have to pray awhile to get the first. You may have to pray and counsel awhile to get the second. And somewhere along the line you may have to change your own ideas. But if you are determined to know God's will for you, and fill a place of His appointment, and you pursue those two channels with a humble, earnest, loving heart, you can know. After all, if we are to fit in with others (and that is what finding our place involves), the Lord will need to let our brethren know were we fit as well as to let us know. Isn't that right?

I knew a man once a long time ago. He had a great burden to be the president of the conference, and he thought it was from the Lord. He talked with me about it. We had prayer together. I think He was willing to let the Lord's will be done, and I think it was done. But it wasn't by his becoming conference president. He never did. I think he was led to see that the Lord's hand was in it as time went on. After all, if he was to be conference president, the Lord would have to tell

somebody else beside him, wouldn't He? It works that way. That is true all the way up and down the line of fitting in with any organization, and the church of Christ is organized.

In the book *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 9, page 264 we read concerning filling positions of responsibility in the church and the conference that the Lord has certain men to fill certain positions. That echoes what we started off with in Mark 13:34. He gives to each one his own work to do:

"God will teach His people to move carefully and to make wise choice of men who will not betray sacred trusts"
Testimonies for the Church, Vol. 9, page 264.

The servant of the Lord mentions illustrations both from the Old Testament and from the New Testament to show how God guided as His people sought Him for wisdom in who to chose to carry responsibility.

Someone says, Yes, back there one of the ways they did it was by casting lots. I wish we did that today. Then I would know.

Suppose when it came time to fill the office of elder of the church we would write out all the names of the members and put them in a box, then pray and ask God for wisdom. Somebody would put in their hand and bring out one of those slips, and the name on that slip would be the elder. Then we would know for sure who the Lord wanted, wouldn't we? Well, I was very glad to get a definite statement on that from inspiration. If any of you would like to know what the Spirit of Prophecy says about casting lots, this is for you:

"I have no faith in casting lots. We have in the Bible a plain
'Thus saith the Lord' in regard to all church duties... .

"I would say to the members of the church in _____,
'Read your Bibles with much prayer. . . .' To cast lots for the officers of the church is not in God's order. Let men of responsibility be called upon to select the officers of the church" *Selected Messages*, Book 2, page 328.

What do we call those men of responsibility who are called upon to do this? The nominating committee. There is a nominating committee now. I don't mean this minute, but through these days, these weeks. They are studying to find God's will for the officers of this church for the coming year. That is one of the reason I am studying with you how God answers our prayer for each one of us to know his place. Committees have their place in doing that.

In this institution study is being given to the place this one is to occupy and that one is to occupy. The positions of responsibility in the sanitarium, on the farm, in the shop, in the office, and the other phases of the work.

Does God use committees? Yes. Does that mean they are infallible? No, they are not. God uses a lot of things that are not infallible. He uses preachers to

preach who are not infallible at all. I know, because I am one of them. But to me it is a wonderful thing that God is using poor human beings to think His thoughts after Him and to work out His will. So these committees, in harmony with this instruction, get together and study.

Some of you are on the nominating committee. Some of you are on the board of committees that have to do with choosing people for responsibility in the institution. Those of you who are not at this particular time may be at some other time. I share with you a few thoughts for committee members.

The first is the suggestion of prayer. Tell me. If a man ought to get down on his knees and seek God earnestly for wisdom concerning his own duty, shouldn't he be at least equally in earnest in seeking God when a group get together to study the duty of others?

And what should be our burden when we pray earnestly alone before we come to a committee or board meeting? The first thing to do when you are going to fill a glass is to be sure it is clean and empty. Is that right? It is quite a disappointment to try to carry clean, pure water in a cup or glass that is defiled.

Do you know one of the reasons God lets us get on committees and boards? God is hoping there will be something about it that will burden us enough to get down on our knees and cry to Him to purify our hearts. And such a burden ought to humble us.

We ought to pray the Lord that He will empty us not only of sin, but of all our preconceived ideas, of all our human preferences. The church of God on earth is not a political party. An institution which is carried on for God is never to have within it elements angling for position.

It has been a great joy to me through these twenty years at Wildwood at this church and this institution to observe a sweet spirit of unity at work, both in the church and in the institution. And I pray God that it may ever be thus. It can be if we will carry out these principles. I say to you, every man needs to see God that his mind may be emptied of human ideas.

The prophet Samuel, one of the prophets who walked the closest to God in Old Testament times, was about to make a wrong choice in the nominating committee. You remember that, don't you? As Samuel looked at Jesse's firstborn he said, "Surely the Lord's anointed is before him." He was ready to vote for him to be put in right away. What did God say?

"But the Lord said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, nor the height of his stature; because I have refused him, for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart" 1 Samuel 16:6,7.

In other words, he is not the man for the place. Even the prophet had no way of reading the man's heart until God told him something. If even the prophet was

fooled, don't you think some of us on nominating committee or boards might be fooled? Ah, some of us have been fooled more than once in human nature. God help us to sense our need of earnest prayer that God will indicate His will. Listen:

"If in Christ's day the believers needed to be guarded in their choice of men for positions of responsibility, we who are living in this time certainly need to move with great discretion. We are to present every case before God and in earnest prayer ask Him to choose for us"
Testimonies for the Church, Vol. 9, page 264.

Let me say, friends, that can't all be done in five minutes. I lift a note of caution on this thing of hurrying through committee work when it deals with vital things like this. We need the wisdom of God. Along with prayer every committee member should study the counsels of God relating to the offices to be filled and the fitness of the people to fill them.

Concerning our institutional work, we have hundreds of pages on how to carry on a sanitarium, how to carry on an educational institution, how to carry on our industrial work, and so on. Those who are filling positions of responsibility ought to be men who study those counsels, else how could they know who to put into those positions?

So in the church. God has given us in the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy detailed instruction about the work of an elder, a deacon, and other officers. How can committee members do their work wisely unless they study over and over again those counsels in the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy? We do not come together just to find out what the people want. The voice of the people is not always the voice of God. Aaron would have been elected by acclamation to take Moses' place, but God had no interest in that program. Our business as committee and board members is not to find out what the people want. It is to find out what God wants. And one of the most important ways to find out what He wants is through what He has already told us.

For example, 1 Timothy 3:1-13. All those verses are devoted to the qualifications of church leaders in the church. Titus 1:5-9 gives similar instruction. Every person who fills one of those offices should be well acquainted with those verses. And every committee member who helps call those to office should be well acquainted with those instructions. Let me give you one sample. Speaking of an elder in the church:

"One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)" 1 Timothy 3:4-5.

Who wrote that? Paul did. But who was inspiring it? The Spirit of God. In commenting on that the inspired counsel says:

"The family of the one suggested for office should be considered. Are they in subjection? Can the man rule his own house with honor? What character have his children? Will they do honor to the father's influence? If he has no tact, wisdom, or power at home in managing his own family, it is safe to conclude that the same defect of character will be carried into the church, and the same unsanctified management will be seen there"

Testimonies for the Church, Vol. 5, 618.

I read that merely as a sample of the kind of instruction there is. Every committee member should be well acquainted with what is written in the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy on the qualifications of church officers. How else will they know who God's choice is? Here is a caution against hurrying men into office.

"It would be well for all our ministers to give heed to those words and not to hurry men into office without due consideration and much prayer that God would designate by His Holy Spirit whom He will accept" *Ibid*, page 617.

This suggests that after we have done our work of nominating and electing, unless God accepts them, our work is in vain. I wonder how they would know whether God accepted them or not. I wonder how the church would know. It might be something to ponder. An election ought to be the result of earnest prayer and study to find out what God wants, not what people want.

In considering the qualification to fill a particular office, earnest study should be given to his ability to work with others, unless he is going to be sent out on an expedition all by himself. I remember years ago hearing some of our brethren tell about a man who was an earnest worker. He brought hundreds of people into the truth. But the brethren said the best way to use him was to let him keep busy out in pioneer work, because he worked fine all by himself. God uses some people like that. I don't know if it is a reputation to covet, but that man will probably have more stars in his crown than thousands of other people. My point is that on a committee you are studying offices of people who have to work together.

There are three classes of people every man has to work with who is filling an office. He will have some people who are his helpers. You can think of them as being under him if you want to. Not his hirelings or slaves, but helpers. Does he know how to direct others? Does he know how to get other people to do what he asks them to do in the Spirit of Christ?

A second class of people he has to work with are his fellow workers who are, shall we say, equal in responsibility. Here is a man who has a department in an institution. Here is another man who has another department, and another man who has a third department. They have to work together. So when you consider a man in the church or an institution you have to consider how he works with his fellow workers that he has no authority to boss, and who have no authority to tell him what to do. Can he work with them? Can he gear in with them? And how does he work

with those who are over him? Is he loyal? Is he cooperative. Does he know how to keep in touch with the man who is responsible over him?

Are those good questions? They are not only good, they are vital. We might ask in the words of the apostle, who is sufficient for these things? There are two things God does for us. He sets for us the glorious ideal. And He wants everyone of us to reach that ideal, and believe that with the help of God and our brethren God can use us somewhere in spite of our weakness and deficiency. But you wouldn't put in a man with a wooden leg to run errands all over the place, would you? No. There would be a place for him to fill, but that would not be the place.

So the weaknesses as well as the strong points have to be studied, as under God committees seek to find a place for them to fill. With those thoughts, let me add that every committee member and every board member should be very frank to express his convictions, and equally willing to open his mind to listen to the convictions of others. The strength of the committee work is the blending of the thoughts and ideas of various minds.

There is another important principle in committee work in filling positions. If you were part of a committee who was going to elect the officers of a church, do you know where you would start? Suppose you were on the nominating committee for the conference, do you know which office would be the first one to consider? In each case, the first office to consider is the office of the leader.

Do you know why? Because when he is chosen, he is to have an opportunity to help counsel who his helpers should be. You will find that stated with reference to the General Conference in *Testimonies to Ministers* on page 342 and 323. And that is the plan that is followed. When the nominating committee meets at General Conference, they study that. And when the man is nominated who is to be president of the General Conference, his help is sought in counseling regarding his helpers.

Now a few thoughts to the individual to whom a call comes. Within a few days, sometime before the New Year, the church nominating committee, through its chairman or someone designated by the committee, will approach you and say, Brother, will you serve as one of the deacons for 1963? Will you serve as a Sabbath school officer for 1963? Will you serve in some other capacity?

Likewise in the institutional organization some of you may be approached by the chairman of the executive committee, or the secretary of the board, and invited to consider accepting a certain responsibility in the institution.

May I say, in church work and in institutional work no one has a life tenure on any job. You know that, don't you? We have elections from time to time. It is a nice thing that we can lay down a responsibility and let committees and boards wrestle with the problem of who is to take it. But whether it is to fill a place you have been filling, or to fill a place for the first time, I say a number of you will be asked to do this or that or the other thing. What will you do with that?

Right there comes one of the most important points in my study this evening. If you quickly think about it and say you guess you can do it, while that shows a

cooperative spirit, it isn't the way to do it. If on the other hand you say you couldn't do it, that isn't the way either. Well, you say, what shall I do if I am either to accept or not to accept?

Let's go back to the beginning of our study. "Not more surely is the place prepared for us in the heavenly mansions than is the special place designated on earth where we are to work for God." If you are a part of the church there is a special place for you to fill. If you are part of an institution there is a special place for you to fill. One of the ways that God uses is to lay the burden upon your brethren in committees to invite you to take a certain responsibility. But is that all? No. There is a burden that is to be laid upon your heart by God Himself.

My dear friends, if a committee comes to you and says they would like to have you do this or that, whether it takes a minute or all night to find out what God wants you to do, you had better find out what God's will for you is so you know you are getting your orders from God in the same way the committee got their orders. And you had better check back and forth with each other until your orders agree. I am going to read you something very interesting about this. It expresses it very nicely. And this is from the man who occupied the position of president of the General Conference longer than any other man in our church history, Elder A. G. Daniels. He was president from 1901 to 1922. He was God's man for the place. The servant of the Lord said so several different times. I want to read you what he said at the General Conference of 1901. He had been in Australia and New Zealand as a missionary for many years. This is from the *General Conference Bulletin*:

"I would like to state here a bit of personal experience. In 1886 the General Conference committee wrote to me stating they wished me to go to New Zealand, and asked what I thought about it. It was a new suggestion. I did not have any definite light. But to be a good obedient servant, I said to the brethren, I do not know whether I ought to go or not. If you think I ought to go, I will go, but I will ask you to take the responsibility of the trip.

"I had been taught by precedent, and believed the talk I had heard in conference matters that was the way to do. But after my letter had gone I was aroused, and I was told that was not the position at all for me to take. I was made to realize that I was the servant of the living God; that He had called me to preach the gospel. The field was His and He was the Lord, and He was to tell me where I ought to go. The brethren might make a suggestion, but God must tell me and make me understand it. And I will tell you, brethren, I went off into a barn, and I got down there in the hay, and I told the Lord all about it. I told Him I was his servant, He was the Lord, and He must tell me whether I ought to go to New Zealand or not. And I stayed there until God did tell me.

"I got just as clear evidence I wanted that the Lord wanted me to go to New Zealand. I came down from the haymow and went to my desk and wrote another letter to the General Conference president. I said I want to take back what I have written. I want to tell you that I know where God wants me to labor. He has called me to New Zealand, and I am now ready to go there and go for life, and take the responsibility that will be connected with the trip. I wrote it, and God let the peace and light come into my heart.

"Brethren, in all the darkness and difficulties of fourteen years I have never had a single doubt as to my field of labor. I have known that I stood where God placed me, and when darkness came I knew that there was light beyond"
General Conference Bulletin 1901, page 49

Isn't that wonderful friends? Think what he would have missed if he had merely gone on the first letter. What is the difference? He did what the committee asked, but he checked with headquarters, and he got a conviction from God that agreed with the call of the brethren. That is the call to prayer and the call to counsel.

I want to tell you an experience I heard a dear minister tell that involved his father who was a pioneer missionary to one of our far off mission fields. This was when the General Conference was very much smaller than it is today. They were meeting in Battle Creek, which was the headquarters then. From day to day the brethren were studying various things.

In the early part of the session the call had been placed for a certain man to go to a mission field. It was Africa. But this man who had been called to Africa could not get the conviction as he prayed that God wanted him to go. From the first day the thing was mentioned in the committee there was another man on that committee into whose heart came the thought, "I wonder if God doesn't want me to go to Africa." But he didn't say a word to anybody. He just prayed about it from day to day.

The meetings went on, and they were counseling and praying and studying about various things. From time to time word would be said about the African matter. But the brother who had been voted and called said honestly, "Brethren, I just do not have the evidence that is what God wants me to do."

One morning as they opened their meeting, the president of the General Conference looked across the room to a certain brother and said, "There is the man I believe is calling to go to Africa." It was this second man that not a word had been said to or about all week long, but who in his own heart had been feeling the burden of the thing. When the president said that, the second man felt free to open up his heart to the brethren and told how all week the Lord had been burdening his heart for Africa.

Do you think it was hard for the committee to rescind their first action and take a second one? Oh, where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. And the happiest

thing in all the world is the man who knows he is in the place where God wants him and where his brethren want him.

You students who are learning to fit in with an organization may think the responsibility you are called to is a little one. But I advise you to take anything to the Lord in prayer you are asked to do. If it is a simple thing such as teaching a Sabbath School class to little children, remember that if you are the one to teach those children, it will mean stars in your crown in the kingdom of God. But if you are not the one, you are getting in the way of somebody else God wants there, and you are missing something else God wants you to do.

Oh, the beautiful balance between the call!

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