

Thanksgiving Day

Story of Wildwood

#0081

Study Given by W. D. Frazee—November 24, 1972

Last week it was my privilege to hold a week's meetings in Phoenix, Arizona. I was doubly glad to be invited to come to Phoenix because it gave me the opportunity to be back where I was born. My father and mother accepted this message shortly before I was born. They were baptized in an irrigation canal near Phoenix. My memories of the first Sabbath Schools I attended were connected with the church in Phoenix on Third and Pearce Street. The pastor took me by there the other day. It's been converted into a building for another purpose now. The church has moved several times into larger quarters, and they have a beautiful church there now.

My cousin took me to see the place where the ranch was and where my earliest memories go back to. It's now part of the city of Phoenix. God was getting me ready back then for Wildwood. Some people hear stories about the short rations and the difficult times and a meager diet at Wildwood. They're a little late with those stories. I remember a time when I was a little fellow there in Phoenix; my father was wrestling with problems due to not wanting to break God's Sabbath. There were several weeks that all we had to eat was just cornmeal mush and milk. Sometime later, when I was around six years old, my father was hunting work. All we had to eat was just wheat. That seemed to take care of us for a while. As I looked at the table today that we were gathered around, I rejoiced at the *abundance* of what God has given us. But I am thankful this thanksgiving day that I grew up in a poor home. It was poor because of obedience to God's commandments. I think those days are coming again. There may be some of you students who may have a hard time. Not at the table, for I know you are getting a lovely diet. But adversity and trials and difficulties are a part of the experience through which God leads His children.

I was thinking of an interesting testimony that the servant of the Lord gave to a woman a hundred years ago who, for years, was drilled in the school of adversity. But the Lord said through the angel that He was going to reveal to her something in her life that she didn't know anything about. She had prayed for prosperity, and God was going to give it to her. She thought that if she had more, she'd give and give. But as the servant of the Lord saw it all in vision, the more that woman got, the more self-centered she became until she lost sight of her obligations and privileges. The deep Christian experience she had in the days of adversity was lost. I pray God that Wildwood shall not go that way.

I thank the Lord for the increasing calls in every direction. I was thinking of the early days of another institution. I shall not mention its name, but it was doing a work similar to what this institution has sought and is seeking to do. At one time, it was spreading out. But it got bit with certain bugs, my friends.

A dear friend of mine, a minister of many years, says that medical missionary work, like its divine Author, has been crucified between two thieves. One is the thief of commercialism, and the other is the thief of professionalism: commercialism and professionalism. God keep us from either one.

I was asked to tell a few things concerning the early history of our work here. We came here in January of 1942, a few weeks after Pearl Harbor. The background of our coming was this: For years, with our company of Gospel medical workers, we had carried on evangelistic work in California, Utah, Oklahoma, and Louisiana. While I was in conference employ as an evangelist and pastor, my helpers were largely self-supporting. Elder W. C. White, Sister White's son, encouraged us very much in this work in the union of the medical and evangelistic, in the union of the conference and self-supporting, in the union of the ministry and the laymen's work.

Elder W. C. White also encouraged us in a line of endeavor of which we had little opportunity to carry out as we moved from place to place, and that was the union of city work with a rural base. He gave us *Testimonies* on this, some from published sources and some from unpublished sources. So when the opportunity came to consider establishing a training program for Gospel medical missionaries in this country location, we saw the hand of God in it and came here in January 1942.

When we came here, we came without financial assets or backing or promises. We had a group of about 15 who came here. In the Evangelid House in the days of muddy and dusty roads, our workers gathered. This place was largely a donation to the work, but we did assume obligations of \$3,000. It took what money we had just to get here with our things. So, as we signed these obligations \$3,000, the question was, how would the money be provided? We set to work on this place, and our workers who were capable and trained went out and did nursing work in the community upon Lookout Mountain and Chattanooga. They turned in their receipts to help keep the ship floating. Meanwhile, we were praying that God would provide money to pay off this indebtedness and to enable us to begin to build. The Lord has done all of this.

I hold in my hand the last note of this series. We had six notes of \$500 each. The last was due on July 12, 1943. Three days before this was due, we had no money to pay it. There was nothing strange about that. We'd been through that before and since. But in answer to prayer, the Lord supplied through several different channels, all unknown to us the week before, the money to pay that last bill.

In these days of inflation, it's hard to understand what the paying off of a final payment of \$500 on indebtedness of \$3,000 means. To many people sitting here tonight, that doesn't sound like very much money. But that was a great deal for a little group who had nothing when they came here, and the money was very hard to get. God answered our prayers and enabled us to meet these responsibilities.

One of our early projects was the building of what we now call Mission Manor or the old sanitarium building. We had no tractor. We had no bulldozer. We had nothing to excavate with. We began that building with our group getting together and having prayer, taking a shovel, and turning some dirt. We said the sanitarium had begun.

Later we took our two mules and a plow and a scraper and began to turn the earth as we could. We did with by hand with pick and shovel the work that couldn't be done with the mules. It was my privilege to work on this building, although I'm not a builder, but I could use a pick and shovel. In the corner where the laboratory used to be, I squared out that corner with a pick and shovel. Some months later, I had the privilege of putting on the last shingles.

God worked many miracles to make that building possible; many, many miracles. The supplying of lumber was a wonderful example of divine providence. Under the pine trees in the front yard, we knelt down and prayed to the Lord that He would send us material, for it was wartime, and lumber could not be secured. Before the week was over, our men noticed in the newspaper an ad for some barracks buildings of a construction company that were for sale 75 miles from here on the Ocoee River. Investigating these, it was found that the whole lot could be purchased for less than \$1,000. But they had to be wrecked, and of course, we had to pay for them. We didn't have the money, but God supplied it providentially, and we bought the buildings.

We were conducting our first summer institute then. The conference had loaned us some tents. A number of the students volunteered to go up and help wreck these barracks buildings. So I went with them and held classes up there in physiology and coming events. The other students went ahead with classes down here. The Lord miraculously provided the transportation to get that lumber down here. A truck was found that could be bought for \$475. When we had absolutely no money to buy it with, in answer to prayer, the Lord impressed a woman, who knew nothing about our needs at that particular time but someone told her about our work, to give us a check for \$500. It came on the very day we needed it in order to buy the truck.

Experiences like this from time to time were necessary in order to put up that building. It was quite an undertaking for a little group of workers. One of the most marvelous providences in connection with putting up that building was the Lord sending in workers. When we started the building, the only man we had on the place who knew anything about building was a roofer; hardly the one to start a building. But he at least knew how to make some forms to pour concrete. When it came time to put up the blocks, the Lord sent a man here who was a colporteur and wished to take some of our classes. He did colporteur work during the week, took classes in the evening, and on Sunday, put up the blocks for the foundation of that building, teaching our men how to put up the blocks.

When it was necessary to put in the plumbing, two plumbers drove in from Oklahoma on a Thanksgiving morning and offered their services. They didn't know we needed them, but we did and God did, and He sent them. They not only spent their vacation putting in the plumbing, but they even put in some money to help buy the plumbing material. One of them promised to come back and put in the fixtures when we had the building finished. He did more than that. He got infected with this thing. He sold his place and came here and helped us finish that building, and he helped built Haskell Hall, Sunnyside, and several other buildings on the place.

May I say, folks, as I've observed this program for 31 years, you'll smile when I tell you this but I mean it very seriously, it's dangerous to get around this thing. [Audience laughter] That's right. I recognize it isn't for everyone, but there are some people who get infected with it, and it causes them to put money into the program. It causes them to put time and effort and service into the program. And if they get it bad and deep enough, it causes them to put *themselves* into the program. For this, I bless the Lord. Oh yes, it's been one wonderful providence after the other.

But miracles are not something that God just does to entertain us like the fourth of July fireworks sitting by the lake. Not a bit of it, friends. The time that God works miracles is when people are trying to do a job for Him, and they get in a jam doing it, and unless He helps them out, they're sunk. This is when God works miracles, and He delights to do it.

I remember in the little white cottage, now our recording studio, a lady came in one morning. She had spent about a week here. She said, "Brother Frazee, I'm leaving today or tomorrow. I thought that before I left I'd like to help you with some little thing."

I got the idea that she might want to buy a few dishes for the kitchen, or something of that kind. I told her a little about our work and our program and what we were trying to do in training students, and in our expanding missionary work. She sat down and wrote us a check for \$1,000. The way money is today, it would have to be quite a bit more than \$1,000 to make the impact that that did. And I tell you that this was the last day of the month, and we were facing bills on the first of the month. We had a piece of equipment that our men felt that we needed to buy, and we were going to have to either get it the next day or lose the chance to get it. You understand that this check came right on time—it's what we needed.

After she'd written the check and handed it to me, I said, "Sister, I think I owe you an explanation of what you've done because you don't know what you've done." Because I hadn't told her any hard luck story, I hadn't told a thing about our pressing needs or the urgency of it. I'd simply told her what we were trying to do and what our dreams were, and God had impressed her heart. But my point is, that came right in the nick of time.

I have seen things happen again and again on this place. But no two things have ever happened just alike. In fact, I read that our Heavenly Father has a thousand ways of providing for us, of which we know nothing. And as I look back over these nearly 32 years now in this work on this place, one of the greatest reasons for it is the experience in faith and prayer that come to those who participate—an experience in seeing God answer the requests of His children. But this can never come to people who always know where things are coming from and who have everything provided. To get out on a limb with God, where unless God works you're gone. Some people might call this dangerous living. But it's the safest thing in the world, friends.

I'll remind you that faith and presumption lie side by side. They're very close. The children of Israel went *through* the Red Sea by *faith*. The Egyptians tried to do the same thing, and they got drowned. More than one person, hearing such stories

as I've told you tonight and seeing such things done as I've been describing, has run off and decided he'd do it too and got drowned. Swimming can be dangerous. People get drowned doing it, but some swim. And in a work of this kind, we're either going to swim or we drown. We have to learn to swim by faith, and that includes sacrifice.

A few years ago, when it became evident that we must build a *real* sanitarium and hospital, this other, when we built it, we built it as a temporary building, but we used it for many, many years. It was at a time when in the providence of God, I was being called in various places to hold meetings, and also to give leadership and encouragement to our sister institution in Colorado. I said to the brethren here that this new sanitarium and hospital that was being planned was going to be a gigantic undertaking.

Most of you who are here now were not here when we went through the building of the old sanitarium. In the building of this new sanitarium and hospital, it is an opportunity for you to have an experience in seeing God answer prayer, and see God lead through all kinds of difficulties in supplying money and supplying workers and supplying materials. And I thank God that our family of workers on this place accepted the challenge and got under the load, and I rejoice at what was done. Time after time, when I would come back from Colorado or other places where we were laboring, and I'd see that building taking shape over on the hill, I'd rub my eyes and say, "How does it happen"? And finally, when it was completed and we moved in there and the rooms began to fill up with patients, even now as I go over there on the hill and I go up and down those halls, I think is it really true? Did it happen? It must be, there it is! And do you know folks, that when that building was started, the only money in hand was enough to pour the footings? That's all. And no promises.

And may I tell you that never once in the 32 years we've been at Wildwood have we gone to the bank and borrowed money to go ahead with. Month after month after month we'd pay our operating bills. The electric company doesn't have to wait for the bill to be paid, or the fuel bills or the grocery bills. The putting up of these buildings has been made possible through the gifts of loving friends, some a part of our worker group, some in the community, and some far away. Some who have never seen this place have by faith poured money into it. And they share with us in the glorious results. God in heaven has moved upon hearts.

Some of the greatest miracles have been in supplying the workers. I think of the men that God sent into this place to help put up the old sanitarium and the other buildings. And this big new venture in building the present sanitarium, I think of the people God has sent to staff this. When we came here, we didn't have any doctor. And as we read the books, we believed that God wanted us to have a physician. We prayed about it for several years. Finally, God sent us a physician. He was a man who loved the *Testimonies* and wanted to practice according to God's methods of treatments. And through the years God has sent us one physician after the other. Some are now laboring in other institutions and other units, and God has sent us at the present time a medical staff that we thank Him for.

I was just telling Doctor Hansen how thankful I am that the Lord impressed him and his wife to come here and cast their lot in this work. Aren't we thankful?

We're glad for others who have joined and *will* join from time to time. This thing is catching on. Listen friends, *every* worker that God sends here is an answer to prayer. Every worker that God sends here has been *sent* by Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Every worker that God sends here is having an *experience* in faith and prayer.

Through the years, people have marveled at how Wildwood can get workers for nothing that they can't get by offering good salaries. I can only explain it in this way, friends: God has wanted something to be done here that those particular workers could do. And when a man realizes that he's been bought with a price, and that price is the blood of Jesus. As a friend of mine said, "Our wages have already been paid by the cross of Calvary. All God has promised us is an expense account." That's enough, isn't it? God says, "Go into the vineyard and whatsoever is right I will give you." Oh, I'm so glad He has kept to His promise, friends.

As my wife said, "The best days of Wildwood are ahead." I know that.

This afternoon I took my wife in the car, and we drove down and let her look in at the decorations where we had dinner today. And we drove on down, every corner we turned there's a memory, you know. We've lived all over this place; we've lived in 20 different places on these 500 acres. And as we passed around and reviewed the providences of God, I thank Him. On this Thanksgiving Day, I have more to be thankful than ever in my life.

Perhaps you won't misunderstand me when I say that this Thanksgiving Day, I am very thankful for my wife. I was telling her this afternoon as I was reviewing what had happened at the dinnertime, "You know, Helen, if you hadn't been my wife, there wouldn't be any Wildwood."

Now I'm sure God would have had something else somewhere; don't misunderstand me. But as far as I am concerned, the reason I am in this work and *still* in it is that I've had a wife who loves the Lord, and has been willing to sacrifice and put her whole life into it. Dear women, if you have a husband who wants to work for God, help him do it and don't get in his way.

I've seen more than one man come on this campus through the years with a wife whining or complaining, or dreaming of greener fields somewhere else. And eventually, the poor fellow had to leave because it takes money to gratify a lot of wishes.

Behind every man who makes a success in this program, there is usually a woman who prays and works—an unsung heroine.

I rejoice, friends, that God is still producing people. My heart is glad as I see young people coming into this program to whom worldly positions and worldly honors and worldly wealth means nothing. They have cast aside those things, and they're anxious to do just one thing—get the work finished. Get the work finished.

Now, I'm going to give an opportunity for those who would like to give one sentence of Thanksgiving. All who wish to, just come right on down. You won't have

to stand long because remember it's just one sentence. We're going to spend a few minutes in public testimony and thanksgiving to God.

Copyright 2021. All rights reserved.

W. D. Frazee Sermons
435 Lifestyle Lane, Wildwood, GA 30757
1-800-WDF-1840 / 706-820-9755
www.WDFsermons.org
support@WDFsermons.org