

How to Prepare

#0117

Study Given by W. D. Frazee

Paul tells us in Romans 15:

“For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope” Romans 15:4.

This story of Joseph has always been a great blessing to me. I remember when I was a little fellow, we were poor, but my mother had a little book with a gray cover, and some red letters on that front cover, “The Story of Joseph.” There was a time in my life when every Sabbath afternoon that particular story was read. And I’ve always loved to hear about the experiences of Joseph.

The 41st chapter of Genesis presents Joseph as he stands before Pharaoh. You remember the background: his years in Potiphar’s house as a slave, and then his years in jail under false accusation. And now suddenly in the providence of God, he’s called from the prison to interpret the king’s dreams. With humility and confidence he tells Pharaoh,

“*It is not in me: God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace*” Genesis 41:16.

Pharaoh had a dream about cows. The skinny ones were eating up the fat ones. He had another dream about grain. The number seven was in each dream. Pharaoh didn’t know what it meant, and none of his counselors did.

But the Lord gave Joseph the answer: The two dreams mean the same thing. There are going to be seven years of plenty, and then there are going to be seven years of famine. Those were the fat cows and the skinny cows, you see, and the good grain and the blasted ears. Joseph’s advice was to store up grain during those seven good years so that they would have something when the seven years of famine come.

This is exactly what Pharaoh did. When he and his counselors had thought the thing through and looked over the kingdom, they couldn’t think of a man who could head up that food conservation program better than Joseph. And so the slave became the ruler of Egypt under Pharaoh, and carried through that great conservation program.

Now, I have selected this passage to call our attention to tonight, because of this statement in *Volume 6 of the Testimonies to the Church*, page 219:

Every institution established by Seventh-day Adventists is to be to the world what Joseph was in Egypt" *Testimonies for the Church, Volume 6*, page 219.

In our homes, in our sanitariums, in our schools, whatever we are a part of in God's great program, we are to be to the world today what Joseph was in Egypt. Joseph foretold a coming time of trouble. Do we have a coming time of trouble to foretell? Has divine prophecy warned us and told us to warn others? Yes. But Joseph's message was more than a warning of trouble. Thank God. Its *focus* was on what to do to get ready. Is that our focus today? Oh, yes.

Let's turn to Amos 8:11–12:

"Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD: And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the LORD, and shall not find it" Amos 8:11–12.

Here is a famine bigger than the famine of Egypt, and far more serious. Thank God, we are told ahead of time how to get ready.

What a day, my friends, when men are traveling—some on foot, some in automobiles, some in jet planes—all over this planet, hunting for *somebody* to declare to them the Word of God, to make plain the way of salvation. But no, it's too late. Probation has closed. The great time of trouble has come. The plagues are falling and memory awakens. Men who have derided and scorned the messengers of God, multitudes who have neglected the offers of salvation, long now for the message which they paid no attention to.

It was so in Noah's day. When the rain began to fall, and the rivers rose, oh how many there were that started pounding on that ark, but the door was shut. The door was shut.

And this at Noah's time and this in the coming time of trouble is no arbitrary action on the part of God. Even when conscience awakens and memory stirs, there is no deep-seated purpose to turn from sin. Men merely want to escape the results of sin. And that is not true repentance. Had those sinners in Ante diluvia managed to get in the Ark and ride through the flood, they would have returned to their idolatry, their lust, their murder as soon as they hit the land again.

Confirmed sinners are impossible to change. This is what the text in Amos is talking about: "a famine in the land." When God's message is no longer preached, and God's Word no longer heard, mercy's day has ended. The day of wrath and justice has come.

If that famine is ahead, as our text says, a famine of hearing the words of the Lord, what should you and I be doing right now? Is there a famine *now* of hearing the words of the Lord? No, we are in the years of *plenty*. We are in the years of the

fat cows and the well filled-out ears of grain. And if we believed the message of Joseph, if we believe the message of God in this momentous hour, we will be gathering up the grain and storing it to use in the time of famine. For all we'll have *then* is what we store up *now*.

Isn't it a shame, friends, that some people are filling their storehouses with chaff? Everybody is putting away something in these billions of brain cells. Everybody is storing *something*. But through Jeremiah, God asks,

"What is the chaff to the wheat?" Jeremiah 23:28.

In the book *The Ministry of Healing*, the servant of the Lord says:

"As I see libraries filled with ponderous volumes of historical and theological lore, I think, Why spend money for that which is not bread? The sixth chapter of John tells us more than can be found in such works" *The Ministry of Healing*, page 441.

What is the chaff to the wheat? What are you putting in your storehouse? I repeat: *something's* going in.

"The Great Teacher who came down from heaven has not directed teachers to study any of the reputedly great authors. He says: 'Come unto Me... Learn of Me... and ye shall find rest unto your souls.' Matthew 11:28–29. Christ has promised, and in learning lessons of Him we shall find rest" *Testimonies for the Church, Volume 6*, pages 159–160.

Man's books with worthless chaff are stored,
God's book does priceless wealth afford;
Then leave the chaff and spend your pains,
In gathering up the golden grains.

Yea, were the sun one crystal light,
The earth a golden ball;
And diamonds all the stars of night,
This book were worth them all.

~Robert Chapman

Oh, what golden grain we can store in these granaries of our mind. How we shall appreciate living on *this* food we have stored away during that time of famine in Jacob's trouble. How much these promises will mean to us. Again and again, my heart is burdened to encourage all that I can encourage, young and old, to memorize the Bible.

I was reading about the Waldenses, those witnesses for God that through the Dark Ages kept the torch of truth burning; there in the valleys of the Alps, surrounded by those mighty mountains, often enduring persecution, they trained their children in the Bible.

In *Great Controversy*, page 65, I read:

“The Waldenses were among the first of the peoples of Europe to obtain a translation of the Holy Scriptures. Hundreds of years before the Reformation, they possessed the Bible in manuscript in their native tongue. They had the truth unadulterated, and this rendered them the special object of hatred and persecution.

“From earliest childhood the youth were instructed in the Scriptures and taught to regard sacredly the claims of the law of God. Copies of the Bible were rare; therefore its precious words were committed to memory. Many were able to repeat large portions of both the Old and the New Testament. While attention was given to branches of general learning, the Bible was made the chief study. The Gospels of Matthew and John were committed to memory, with many of the Epistles” *Great Controversy*, pages 65, 67–68.

Isn't that wonderful? Children and youth repeating large portions of the Old and the New Testament. The Bible was made the chief study. Not like a popular theological seminary, I heard about, where a student went clear through and graduated without ever owning a Bible. No, the *chief study* of the Waldensian youth was the *Bible*—the Word of God.

“The Gospels of Matthew and John were committed to memory, with many of the Epistles” *Ibid.*, page 68.

There's something to think about. Just fill the mind with chapter after chapter, book after book. You see, we are in Joseph's time of plenty, but the famine is coming, and coming soon. Thank God, there are storehouses in which we can store the grain. Let's not leave room for chaff. What do you say? Praise God.

Now, in thinking of this coming time of trouble, I would have us ponder not merely on memorizing the Bible, but there are other things we need to do in a practical way in getting ready for that time. Psalms 91 pictures God's people being protected from the plagues.

“Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day; Nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness; nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday. A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee” Psalms 91:5–7.

God is going to protect His people during that awful time of trouble: from great epidemics that sweep over this world slaughtering millions. Now, this will be without question by the special protecting power of God. But in all God's plans for men, He gives them a part to act. He protected Noah and his family from the flood, but there was something Noah had to do in a practical way to get ready for it. Every day as Noah preached, he practiced. And if you and I believe that the health problems of

this world are going to get so terrible that millions will die from various diseases, do you see that our faith, if it's a true faith, will find expression in two very important activities. One is learning and practicing the laws of health in our own experience. The other is reaching out to learn how to help others with their health problems.

Inspiration tells us that soon there will be no work done in ministerial lines but medical missionary work. The inspired call tells us that we have come to a time when every member of the church should take hold of medical missionary work (see *Testimonies for the Church, Volume 7*, page 62). Do you remember that statement that says that in this coming time of trouble, there will be suffering ones, plenty of them, and we will have the opportunity to help people?

Oh friends, wouldn't it be better, like Joseph, to be called from the prison to solve problems than to languish in the dungeon because we know nothing practical to do? *Now* is the time to prepare. *Now* is the time to learn simple treatments. *Now* is the time to learn simple cooking. *Now* is the time to learn simple agriculture. *Now* is the time to learn physiology and hygiene and health education, and be sharing these things with our friends and neighbors.

We are in the years of the fat cows now. The years of the skinny cows are just ahead. We're in the time now when we can store up the information and the experience that will enable us to go through this time of trouble ahead, triumphant in our own experience and helping others. What a destiny, friends! What an opportunity. What an hour to be living in. What do you say?

We want to get ready not only by committing the Scriptures to memory, and by entering into the health principles and practice. We want an *experience* with God in our own lives.

Someone was telling me about an inmate in a state penitentiary up north, who is serving a life term. He committed murder and is serving a life term. He's been there for many years, and as a pastime, he's taken to committing verses of the Bible to memory, and he has memorized the entire Bible. But it hasn't saved his soul at all. He's just as much of a sinner as when he entered the penitentiary. Too bad, isn't it?

My point is this: *Is* it possible to fill the mind with truth and yet, it not reach the heart? Is that possible? Do you remember that story that Jesus told in Matthew 25:1–10 about the ten young women who were waiting for the bridegroom to come? As the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept, and at midnight the cry came, "Here the bridegroom is coming. Go out to meet him." All ten woke up. All ten trimmed their lamps. But then the difference showed up. Five, along with the oil in their lamps, had provided *extra* oil that they carried with them, and that was *poured* into the lamps that were just about to go out. But you remember in the story, there were five of those young women, who had neglected to provide for that contingency. They were left *without* in the blackness of the night. Only five went *in* to the marriage supper.

My dear friends, when the great time of trouble comes, it will be too late to *get* the oil. When that crisis hour strikes, it will be apparent who has stored up extra oil

in advance. So whether we use the figure of storing up the *grain* in the storehouse, or use the figure of storing up extra *oil* in anticipation of the tarrying, the lesson is clear in either case: we must *get* ready before the crisis comes. The Ark must be built *before* it starts raining. Oh, I thank God that He's given you and me the opportunity day by day of developing not only in our knowledge of truth but in an experience of personal fellowship with Christ. What do you say?

One of the great aids in this comes in a box labeled 'trials.' Did any of you ever get a package in the mail? Or perhaps by special delivery. Usually, we don't say thank you when we get one of those boxes. But it is through trials and difficulties and problems that Jesus is developing an experience of fellowship with Him in those who permit Him thus to work. Trials themselves do not automatically thus develop us. Trials make some people bitter instead of sweet. Trials leave some people weak instead of strong. Trials fill some minds with doubt instead of faith. But it need not be so. Faith comes by hearing the Word of God. And if we will take these promises that abound in the Scripture and read them and claim them as we enter these trials from day to day, *we* can be developing an *experience* which will fit us to go through this coming time of trouble. Aren't you glad?

Now, another very practical thing in storing up. Let's go Matthew 6:19–21. Here is some very practical counsel from Jesus in His Sermon on the Mount:

"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" Matthew 6:19–21.

In the coming time of trouble, the wealth of this world will be of no value to us. But thank God, there's an opportunity now to *transfer* our wealth, whether it be little or great, to transfer our wealth to a bank where there is no discount and no inflation and no recessions; where our wealth can be eternally secure, and where we can draw compound interest on our investment through all eternity. Can we actually turn *money* that we have in our possession into something that will be of enduring worth all through eternity? Yes. Do you know what it is, friends? Thank God, He doesn't take these tiny little bits—it used to be gold and silver, now it's paper and some cheap metal—but thank God, I say, that we don't have to think of transferring these paltry little sums into a tiny corner of one of those golden streets up there. Heaven does not value that gold that way; that's why they use it to pave streets. Do you know what the unit of value in Heaven is? It's a soul. We talk of a dollar; Heaven talks of the soul. And do you know what the rate of exchange is?

"One soul is of more value to heaven than a whole world of property, houses, lands, and money" *Testimonies for the Church, Volume 6, page 21.*

Think of it, friends. If you could take all the money in this world and all the houses in this world and all the jewels in this world—the diamonds and the rubies and all the rest—and every bit of value that people list on the stock exchange or in

banks, and pile it up all together in one pile, *one* soul is of more value to Heaven than all that pile! Do you see what a tremendous opportunity you and I have as we think about the coming famine, the coming time of trouble, to get our assets transferred from the shrinking experiences that money is going through right now, into assets that will be of eternal worth and eternal value forever and forever? Isn't that a wonderful opportunity, friends? Too bad Wall Street can't hear of this, isn't it?

I'm so glad that God has made it possible for the poor to get in on this. Even our tiny offerings, brothers and sisters, if they're given from hearts of love, are, in the providence of God, translated into souls that will shine as the stars forever and ever.

And so, this evening, friends, as we think of Joseph's dream and his counsel to get ready now for what's ahead, we're thinking tonight first of all of storing up what? The Word of God. Where? In our minds. Then we're thinking of building better health and equipping ourselves more and more to minister to the physical needs of others in anticipation of the awful sicknesses ahead. We're thinking of entering into an experience of fellowship with God, that no matter what trial comes, our anchor will hold because we know His promises are sure. And we're thinking of so relating ourselves to Him in a practical way with our material wealth, whether it be little or great, that under the leading of His Spirit, we can transfer our assets from earth to Heaven, from money and property to human souls saved in the kingdom of God, and *thus* we can enter into the riches of Jesus' reward to those who share with Him in the work of soul-winning.

Let's fill our granaries with golden grain. What do you say?

[Testimony service]

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