

Preparing Martyrs

#0282

Study Given by W. D. Frazee

You will remember that in that first vision recorded in *Early Writings*, the prophet, walking through the green fields of eternal reward, saw groups of the redeemed enjoy what God had prepared. Among them were some who had a border of red on the garment—you remember that? Martyrs that were slain for His sake.

I was thinking as the ladies were singing, war has its fatalities. Battles mean casualties. And concerning the closing battle of the age-long conflict, the prophet John writes:

“And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ” Revelation 12:17.

Two observations I want to make concerning this: We understand that after probation closes, during the falling of the plagues, none of the children of God will be sacrificed as martyrs. It would do no good at that time because probation has closed. But on the other hand, dear friends, let us not because of that assurance, let us not lose sight of the fact that the battle begins before probation closes.

Already in this great Advent movement, as it sweeps around the world, there have been martyrs—dozens, scores, hundreds of them. Perhaps if we could draw aside the veil that separates us from the future, we would see that along with preparing youth and older ones, to stand without a mediator through the time of the falling of the plagues, part of the destiny of this program—this work of education that’s represented here tonight, is to prepare some to be martyrs like Stephen, like James, like Peter, like Paul, like John Huss, and Jerome, and many others. There have been millions of martyrs since our Lord went to the cross and came from the tomb and went to Heaven to prepare a place for us.

Millions of martyrs, and will there be none in this last battle, the most intense in all the age-long conflict? God help us to get ready, and get our children and youth ready for tomorrow. For tomorrow they will be either witnesses who are martyred or witnesses who will live through the great time of the falling of the plagues, which in some ways will be a more intense time and a more difficult time than any martyrdom.

In this book, *Great Controversy*, which closes the conflict series, there is a chapter near the end of the book called, “The Impending Conflict.”

On the last page of that chapter, I read:

“In the soon coming conflict we shall see exemplified the prophet’s words: ‘The dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ’” *Great Controversy*, page 592.

This focuses the prophecy of Revelation 12:17 directly on this last battle, just before and around the close of probation. As I was looking at this paragraph again this week, I was struck with the sentences immediately preceding this one. Listen, and see if there is anything in current events that this reminds you of:

“Political corruption is destroying love of justice and regard for truth: and even in free America, rulers and legislators, in order to secure public favor, will yield to the popular demand for a law enforcing Sunday observance”
Ibid.

If you and I understand what is written in the book of Revelation and in *Great Controversy*, we shall know the meaning of the headlines which scream at us from day to day in the newspapers, talking about political corruption and graft. What does it all mean? It means that the Devil is getting this country ready to demand a return to religion, which being interpreted is a public demand for Sunday laws.

All these scandals are among the Devil’s means of creating a climate for a Sunday law, and don’t forget it! With the Devil doing all he can to get things ready for the battle, you and I want to be doing all we can to get ourselves and our children, and all whom we can influence ready for this conflict. What do you say?

If we had been back in the days before the flood, and we had passed that great ark as it took form under the hammers of Noah and his sons and the other carpenters, if we had stayed very long we would have listened to Noah preaching to the crowds that gathered, that came to see that great boat constructed on dry land, high above the water lines of the rivers and lakes of that time. I don’t know of all that Noah talked about, but I’m very sure of one thing—he never preached a sermon without talking of the coming flood. That was his message.

Today, you and I need to have our eyes fixed on the coming crisis, and everything we do, everything we say should relate directly or indirectly to preparing people for that crisis. If we lose sight of that, we’ll become just one more denomination, which God forbid. Our message is as specific as the message of Noah.

In our educational work, we want to remember that the purpose of Christian education is *not* to prepare people to settle down in this world and show that the sons of Zion are better than the sons of Babylon at doing the work of this world, and making the money of this world—that’s not our assignment. Our assignment is to prepare the sons of Zion for a battle with Babylon.

This is wartime. There're battles going on now, but the war will increase in intensity. And only that which is essential to prepare our youth to act their part in this closing battle should engage our attention at this time.

What is the issue over, as you study the book of Revelation? I'm so glad we're studying it now in our Sabbath School lessons. I'm sure you're impressed with the central theme of this great book—the Lamb on one side and the dragon on the other, meeting in conflict. They met in Heaven 6,000 years ago. The dragon was defeated. They met again 2,000 years ago in a special way in the wilderness of temptation and at Gethsemane and at the cross. Again the dragon was defeated.

But this last battle will, in some ways, be the most intense of all, for this is the last. And God is staking everything on the loyalty of His children. What is the issue over? The issue is the same as it has been for six millenniums. On one side, loyalty manifested in obedience, and on the other side, rebellion manifested in disobedience.

Let me read this comment from *Great Controversy*:

“From the very beginning of the great controversy in heaven it has been Satan’s purpose to overthrow the law of God. It was to accomplish this that he entered upon his rebellion against the Creator, and though he was cast out of heaven he has continued the same warfare upon the earth. To deceive men, and thus lead them to transgress God’s law, is the object which he has steadfastly pursued. Whether this be accomplished by casting aside the law all together, or by rejecting one of its precepts, the result will be ultimately the same” *Great Controversy*, page 582.

Where is the Bible text on that? James 2:10:

“...whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all” James 2:10.

The man that keeps nine of the precepts, and willfully rejects one, shows that he would reject all, if he cared to, if he wanted to. He shows that his apparent obedience on some points is only a matter of convenience in his own pleasure. He shows that if he obeys, it's because he wants to do that anyway.

Full obedience is the token of true loyalty. Is that right? And this is why the issue down here today is over the Fourth Commandment—the Sabbath commandment. It's the sign and seal of obedience to the whole law. And God is expecting every one of His soldiers to carry the flag, to honor the flag, to show by that loyalty to the entire law.

The enemy has sought in every way to bring in confusion today. He introduces the idea that apostasy is not so bad if it's slow enough, or if it doesn't go too far. I was struck with a news dispatch this week on late findings in health and

medicine. You may wonder what this has to do with my subject, but some of you'll catch it as soon as I read it.

"A team of doctors at a great medical center in the east have just concluded a study on coffee drinking. Since America drinks half of the coffee consumed in the whole world, some of the team's findings drew wide interest.

"Two or three cups of coffee a day, but just one at a sitting, helps perk up the drinker, relieves fatigue, adds to alertness. But five or more cups a day can damage the central nervous system, elevate fatty acids and blood sugar level, and thereby burden the blood vessels and heart.

"The advice of this celebrated team is, don't start children drinking coffee at an early age. Wait for a while before having a second cup. Never take more than two cups at a sitting."

In other words, caffeine is not bad, provided you have moderation. Some people think the same thing about alcohol. I was talking with a gentleman a number of years ago in a state capital building in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. He told me how his father had come over from the old country and raised his family there in southern Louisiana. This man told me, and I know he was just as sincere as he could be, he said, "I greatly honor my father. He taught my brothers and sisters and me how to drink. In the cellar, he had his wine, and he knew wines. He would show us how much to drink, and in all those years, I never saw my father drunk."

He was expressing that in appreciation of his father's teaching on moderation. This is the same thing from these findings by this team looking into the effects of caffeine. But I'd like to tell something else very interesting that has come to light recently, that my friend down in the State Capitol of Louisiana didn't know.

A very fine research worker at Duke University, over here in Carolina, has proved conclusively that even a small glass of any beverage containing alcohol not only affects the thinking of the brain, it destroys thousands of brain cells. It is impossible to drink a little glass of whiskey or a larger glass of wine or a bottle of beer—it is impossible to drink even one dose of alcohol without leaving permanent damage in the brain structure.

And Christian education—don't miss it—is not going to teach our boys and girls and young men and women moderation in the use of alcohol. I have said that to say this: there are many other things in the wine cup of Babylon besides ethyl alcohol—caffeine is another one of them.

Is our mission to the world to tell them not to drink too many cups of coffee? Is it to extol the values of coffee used in moderation? This is one of the deceptions of the enemy. But as with alcohol and with caffeine, so with a thousand other things:

with fiction in literature; with competition and amusements; with display in artificiality in dress and adornment. And so on with many other ingredients.

Popular education tends, if it deals with the damage of these things at all, to emphasize the idea that *moderation* is the word. Sure, try to beat the other fellow, but be a good sport about it, and don't lose your temper. Be moderate in your boasting if you win, and be a good loser if you lose. And in literature, of course, don't go in for bad fiction—whatever that is, but you may have moderation in good fiction. And so, with item after item, ingredient after ingredient in the wine cup of Babylon.

If we are to prepare young people who are loyal to God's commandments in the closing conflict, they must be on a diet—physical and mental and spiritual—of total adherence to the highest standard. This is our challenge, and this is what Christian education is all about.

The further we go up that narrow road, the narrower the road gets, and the fewer the companions we will have. "Straight is the gate and narrow is the way that leads to life."

But may I ask you this, friend: What profit will it be by a program of compromise and adaptation to the world's ideas, to keep a large number with us longer if they desert us in the cause of Christ in the crisis hour? What profit will it be? What value is it by lowering the standards of the church and letting the world's education infiltrate into the program of training? What profit is it if by that we can attract and hold a larger number?

Do you remember that because of Christ's mighty miracles, a large multitude gathered one day as they saw His power, as they were impressed with His teachings, as they ate of the miracle bread, they decided that this man must be our king? Do you remember that Christ, refusing to accept an earthly crown, for His kingdom was not of this world, the very next day preached a sermon which caused them to turn from Him in disdain? The day of the miracle, He had 5,000 men ready to crown Him king. Twenty-four hours later, He had only 12. All the rest had left Him.

He needed someone to advise Him on public relations, didn't He? Judas would have been glad to, had he been listened to.

And today, there are those that feel that this program should be streamlined to have a larger appeal and to gather and hold a larger number. Oh, my friends, we need to study the life of Jesus and to understand that with all the wisdom of eternity looking ahead, He saw the crisis hour of the cross, and *deliberately* delivered a sermon that caused a mighty shaking among His supposed followers before Gethsemane and Calvary should come.

Today, as God looks ahead and sees the crisis hour when the Sunday law will make a real sifting in the church, God has called for a straight testimony within the church that will do some sifting before that sifting comes.

I pray that God will help us to appreciate the straight testimony rather than rise up against it. I pray that every one of our educators will unite with us to lift the standard rather than lower it. Instead of broadening out the narrow way so that more people can walk in it, let us recognize that following Jesus, the way gets narrower.

True, Christ would like to have everybody walking with Him, but He wants them to walk with Him. It isn't enough just to take the Christian name. Don't forget that the terrible persecution against the true church soon to be launched in this country will be led by those who bear the name of Jesus—who claim that they are doing God's service.

Is not this an hour for heart-searching that God will help us in our own inner lives to love God's law? This is what the conflict is over. And just as the conflict will be in the world over full obedience to God's holy law, so within the church, it is only as the law of God is exalted that there can be a true revival.

Notice this statement in *Great Controversy*:

"It is only as the law of God is restored to its rightful position that there can be a revival of primitive faith and godliness among His professed people" *Great Controversy*, page 478.

Even the church can be infiltrated by the popular idea that all we have to talk about is love. Somebody says, "Don't talk to me about doctrine. I just want to hear about Jesus and His love." Well, the man that preached that straight sermon I was just talking about, that caused 5,000 to leave Him, was Jesus, the loving Jesus. But He loved men too well to exhibit the permissiveness that's so popular today. He loved men too well to palliate and excuse their sins and give them the idea that they could carry all the wickedness of this world into Heaven. When He told them about the narrow gate, He meant just what He said. He loved men enough to die for them, but He died that men might be redeemed.

Somebody says, "Didn't Jesus die so that we could be saved because He knew we couldn't do any of this ourselves?"

Indeed. Now I want to ask you something: Suppose there is a man in this country that has billions of dollars; suppose he conceives this plan: He establishes a fund to help people that have broken the law—specifically in our illustration, the law of speeding. He makes provision as he sets up this fund of several billion dollars that anyone who is convicted for speeding on the highways, that this fund that he has set up shall pay that man's fine.

Wouldn't that be a wonderful thing? A very generous thing, wouldn't it? Now you notice this man does not set aside the law. He recognizes the law. And he recognizes the authority of the law to demand a fine for violation. So here's a man that goes out on the highway, 80, 90, 100 miles per hour. The state police finally stop him, he's brought into court, he's given a fine, and we'll say \$100. This man that has been fined turns that ticket over to this fund and our billionaire friend pays off.

You can see that it would do several things, can't you? For one thing, it would ensure quite an income to the courts, and that would be a wonderful thing, wouldn't it? They might even be able to put on more state police to catch more speeders and bring them into court.

You're all are thinking of something else that it would do. What's that? Encourage law violations. I want to tell you something: This is about all the idea that some people have of the sacrifice of Jesus on Calvary. This is about all the idea they have—"Jesus paid it all, so I'm free from the law. Oh, happy condition!" Of course, it would be nice in gratitude to that man that has paid and is paying all these speeding tickets, I'd drive at a decent rate, then there's nothing to worry about until I get caught; then what's he going to do? Pay off.

This is the attitude that thousands of so-called Christians have toward Jesus. He paid for it. Of course, it would be a good thing in gratitude to Jesus to keep from doing the wrong things, especially the really bad things. But then there are a lot of things that nearly everybody does, and if you do them, just ask God to forgive you, and He will. Why? Well, Jesus pays all.

Is it true that Jesus died? Is it true that He died to pay our debt? But did He die to keep us going on sinning, or did He die to help us quit sinning?

“...thou shall call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins” Matthew 1:21.

He said to His disciples:

“If you love Me, [you will] keep My commandments”
John 14:15.

So, we do not keep the commandments in order to get God's favor. When we come to Calvary and see Jesus dying for us, the Just for the unjust, we understand that His purpose is not that we shall continue on in transgression, but that as we behold the fearful price that He paid, our hearts shall be broken; our attitude shall be changed, that we shall cease to find anything funny about sin; that we shall begin to have the same attitude toward sin that He does. This will prepare us to stand as martyrs or as witnesses in the closing conflict and to honor God's law when the whole world makes it void.

To accomplish this is the work of Christian education: whether in the home, the Sabbath school, the day school, or in every other activity of life that Christians should be engaged in. To accomplish this in our own character and in our families and wherever our influence can extend, this is what life is all about.

How many of us tonight would like to send our Savior the word that we're with Him, on His side in this conflict? Thank the Lord.

[Testimony service]

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