

Hiding Place from Every Wind 3 of 8

Icy Wind of Formalism

#0332

Study Given by W. D. Frazee—February 1967

What a place to hide! What a *wonderful* hiding place! Let's read about it again in Isaiah 32:1–2:

“Behold, a King shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment. And a Man shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest” Isaiah 32:1–2.

Who is this Man? Jesus. Thank the Lord. “...A man shall be as an hiding place...” From what? From the wind.

And in Ephesians 4, in our previous lessons, we were reading in the 14th verse that expression, “every wind.”

From every stormy wind that blows,
From every swelling tide of woes,
There is a calm, a sure retreat;
'Tis found beneath the mercy seat.

Oh friends, I'm so glad we know the place to go to get out of the wind. What do you say? *Every wind.*

Well, last weekend we studied two of these “every wind.” We've studied about the whirlwind of lawlessness that's sweeping over the world and soon to culminate in Armageddon. And we've studied about the hurricane of persecution which is to blow against the church and sweep out all the chaff. Thank God, the church founded on the Rock will still be here when the hurricane is over.

Tonight, I want to study with you the *icy* winds of formalism, chilling the warm spirit of love that God desires to be in the heart of each member of His church, each one of His children.

A number of years ago, when we were holding an evangelistic effort in Oklahoma City, I witnessed an ice storm. It had been raining, but in just a few hours, the temperature dropped 25 degrees and the rain, which had been coming (and, of course, was on the trees and the wires and all), rapidly froze. You could go down the streets of Oklahoma City that night, and it was just as if every avenue was lighted with beautiful

chandeliers for all those trees were coated with ice, and the reflection from the street lights and from the headlights of the cars just made it one fairyland—frozen.

Of course, you could hear every now and then some bang, crash, as some of that ice would turn loose, or a whole limb of a tree would be broken off under the weight and fall down, or perhaps a whole tree be taken with the wind and the weight. And as you went down the streets the next day, it was quite a scene of devastation. It was pretty while it lasted, but it was destructive.

And so it is, my dear friends, with the icy winds of formalism as they sweep against the church and through the church. They may make some results which *seem* to be beautiful, but we need to look a bit farther and a bit closer at their results.

In Germany, when the persecution of millions of human beings was going on, someone thought up this method of dealing with some of them: human beings were taken out into sub-zero weather and placed in what the tormentor thought was appropriate poses, and then water was sprayed upon them. And it froze. Those human beings, of course, died, frozen statues.

The Devil has an icy wind that he's trying to involve you and me in, my friends. God help us to know what the proper reaction is to these winds for the winds are blowing. *Every* wind is blowing. And this icy wind of formalism is blowing. Do you know what the Devil wants? He wants to fix every human being in a rigid, mechanical shape.

Turn to Revelation, the 17th chapter. I want you to see the frozen of this world as they're pictured here in the very near future. Revelation 17:13, speaking of the powers of earth who respond to the leadership of Rome:

"These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast" Revelation 17:13.

You notice there is a unity, but it's a unity of rigidity. It's a unity of conformity. It's a unity in which the minds of men are frozen in a death embrace. Rome is perhaps the supreme example in human history of what can be done through the icy winds of formalism. The spirit of Rome, the mystery of iniquity, took the early church, when it was warm and vibrant and on fire for God, and froze it into the Papacy, which we see in all its glory and all its beauty in the Dark Ages. Glory? The glory of conformity. Beauty? The beauty of rigid likeness to the rulership of the pope. This is the mystery of iniquity.

You know, the ecumenical winds are blowing now, but they are the chilling, icy winds which will freeze into conformity all who do not *react* against them. All others will have their part in the fulfillment of this 13th verse.

Now, I want to ask you something, friends. If Rome is an outstanding example of formalism in the worship and religion and the spiritual life, don't you think we ought to be

a little careful how we 'ape' that system, how we imitate it? Don't you think we should? But Protestants in general, today, have lost the fear of the Papacy.

Read this wonderful chapter in *Great Controversy* on "Character and Aims of the Papacy." See how the prophet of God points out how in generations past, Protestants taught their children to be wary of and afraid of, fearful of, the inroads and encroachments of Romanism. But that's largely past now.

We who are believers in the threefold message of Revelation 14 should not lower our defenses. We should not lessen in our wariness. Remember this, friends: it isn't just the roaring lion that we need to be afraid of. When he purrs, he's just as dangerous. And the spirit of Rome is this spirit of formalism, the spirit of conformity.

Turn to Romans, the 12th chapter, and the second verse. What's the fourth word there? 'Conformed.' Is that what we're supposed to be? No, it's what we're supposed *not* to be:

"And be not conformed to this world..." Romans 12:2.

Phillips translates it, "Don't let the world squeeze you into its mold." And I may add, *freeze* you into its mold. Freezing is a certain way of achieving rigid conformity to a mold. Am I right? If you're frozen, you're rigid. Don't let the world squeeze you into its mold, and don't let its icy winds chill you and freeze you into its mold.

The chilling influence of conformity is manifest everywhere today. How else shall we explain the terrible conformity to the modern, shameful fashions in dress? Are you reading the union paper? Have you read the last four issues, those articles on dress and fashion? Did any of you make any changes in your dress after you read the articles? That's the question. There are thousands who'll read those articles and say, "That's surely right. Something ought to be done about it." But the place to begin, my dear friends, is with yourself in your own home, your own wardrobe. Don't let the world squeeze you into its mold or freeze you into its mold.

Do you know why a lot of people do not make the changes in their dress that in their hearts they know they really ought to make? They're afraid of the chilling winds of ridicule. They're afraid of the icy stares of their friends and neighbors and relatives. From head to foot, my friends, from hair right on down to the toes, modern society is under the chilling influence of conformity. There's hardly a person who dares to be himself or herself. There's hardly one who dares to be natural. No, we must be in fashion at all cost. This is due to failing to react against these chilling winds of conformity.

Why are so many yielding to the influence of worldly education today? Why is it popular to attend worldly places of education and to get worldly acceptance? Ah, my friends, it is because of these icy winds of formalism, these chilling winds of conformity.

The early church was peculiar. They were a ‘peculiar people’; that’s what the New Testament says. And in dress, in education, in music, in their witness, they were indeed separate from and distinct from the world.

What a strange thing that the Devil should get so good in these last days that he would allow the world to become so near like what God’s people ought to be that you can’t tell them apart! Oh, no, my friends, it isn’t that the Devil has gotten good—not at all. The icy winds of conformity, the chilling winds of formalism have blown; they are blowing. And these icy winds will *chill* into rigid conformity all who do not have a warm, strong current of blood flowing through their spiritual veins.

Turn to 1 Corinthians, the 14th chapter, and the 15th verse. I wish to spend a little while tonight, especially on the influence of these chilling winds of formalism as they affect our worship, our religious services: in the home, in the Sabbath school, young people’s meetings, and particularly in church services. I want to share some things with you from the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy, and I ask you to consider carefully, friends, are you frozen? If you are, how much life is there in that?

Most things that are frozen have little or no life in them. Am I right? It’s true that there are certain forms of life that can be frozen for the winter and thawed out in the spring. But you’ll agree with me that they don’t accomplish very much while they’re frozen. And to many forms of life, freezing means death.

1 Corinthians 14:15:

“What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also” 1 Corinthians 14:15.

Now, I want to read you an inspired comment on this in *Volume 9*, page 143:

“The evil of formal worship cannot be too strongly depicted...” *Testimonies for the Church, Volume 9*, page 143.

I was reading this over again this week in preparation for this study, and I looked at that, and I said to myself, “Is that what it says?”

“The evil of formal worship cannot be too strongly depicted...” *Ibid.*

There’s something here that’s impossible to exaggerate. It’s the evil of what? Formal worship. I wonder what that is. Well, it’s something to be afraid of. It’s something that’s so much to be feared that it’s impossible to *exaggerate* its danger.

“The evil of formal worship cannot be too strongly depicted...” *Ibid.*

May I tell you, friends, if you want to know something about formal worship, just think of the Roman Catholic system? That’s formal worship gone to seed. That’s formal worship in the ultimate. And I ask again: why should we be interested in aping the mystery of iniquity, in imitating Satan’s masterpiece?

Now, I come back to the statement here in *Volume 9*:

“The evil of formal worship cannot be too strongly depicted, but no words can properly set forth the deep blessedness of genuine worship” *Ibid.*

Now here are two things put in contrast. On one side is the *formal* worship which is so evil, and on the other side is the blessedness of *genuine* worship. What does ‘genuine’ mean? True, real, sincere. What’s the opposite? Counterfeit, put on, pretense. This is warm, glowing; the other is frozen. It may be beautiful, like those frozen people I was telling you about, but oh, friends, it’s dead. And between these two things, there is no affinity. There is no fellowship.

Which do you enjoy: the rigid, frigid routine of formal worship, or the glad, spontaneous inspiration of a service filled with the Spirit of God where human individuality is played upon by the Holy Spirit, and men and women and children take part because they love Jesus and love to witness for Him? Ah, what a difference there is in the two things!

“Well,” someone says, “can’t we have both?”

God forgive us, my friends. God forgive us. I come back:

“The evil of formal worship cannot be too strongly depicted, but no words can properly set forth the deep blessedness of genuine worship. When human beings sing with the spirit and the understanding, heavenly musicians take up the strain and join in the song of thanksgiving” *Ibid.*

Isn’t that wonderful, friends? Now that’s what we read there in Corinthians. Paul said, “I am going to sing with...” what? The spirit and the understanding. In other words, my whole heart and soul and mind are going to be in this thing. It isn’t going to be some parroting off certain phrases that I can sing or pray or go through with my mind a thousand miles away. No, all of my *being* is going to be poured forth in prayer, in praise, in song, in sermon, in response, in testimony, in worship, all the way through.

Friends, what do you say? Let's get away from the rigid, frigid way of worship. And let us go back to the early apostolic, primitive church and find there the inspiration for worship. What do you say?

Now with this, I'd like to put an interesting statement in *Volume 6*. This is the chapter on the observance of the Sabbath. *Volume 6*, page 362:

"We do not obtain a hundredth part of the blessing we should obtain from assembling together to worship God"
Testimonies for the Church, Volume 6, page 362.

Think of that statement! We can have more than *a hundred times* as much. Why not have it? Well, what do we need? We need to get away from this frozen program. We need to get into a spirit of worship like the early church had. Then we'll have the Pentecostal blessing. Perhaps I ought to put it the other way around: if we have the Pentecostal blessing, we'll *have* this spontaneous, inspired, joyous, glorious experience of witnessing for God.

Now, we have on page 367 an example of what the prophet is talking about here:

"Then as you meet from Sabbath to Sabbath, sing praises to Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light...Let the love of Christ be the burden of the speaker's utterance. Let it be expressed in simple language in every song of praise. Let the inspiration of the Spirit of God dictate your prayers. As the word of life is spoken, let your heartfelt response testify that you receive the message as from heaven. This is very old-fashioned, I know; but it will be a thank offering to God for the bread of life given to the hungry soul" *Testimonies for the Church, Volume 6*, page 367.

Now, what is that talking about, anyway, friends? What is that particular last expression there talking about? Let me read it again:

"As the word of life is spoken, let your heartfelt response testify that you receive the message as from heaven. This is very old-fashioned, I know..." *Ibid.*

Turn to the 10sixth Psalm and notice the 4eighth verse, and perhaps it'll be a bit clearer. Psalm 106:48. And when somebody finds it and gets the answer, I wish you'd tell me what it is that's to happen. What?

[Audience responds] Say "Amen."

Is that what it says?

Now, dear friends, I don't want to be irreverent, but I want to misread this verse for you, so you'll see what I'm trying to get at here: "...And let all the ministers say, Amen..." Is that what it says? "...And let all the elders say, Amen..." Is that what it says? "...And let all the deacons say, Amen..." What does it say? "...Let all the *people* say, Amen..." Are there any *people* here tonight?

I'd like to challenge you, friends, some of you. Did you ever say "Amen" once out loud, once in your whole life, in a religious service? Why not? Well, may I be honest and plain with you? We're frozen. That's the problem. Let's warm up. What do you say?

[Audience responds] Amen.

You know, a friend of mine was telling me about a man he knew that once got locked in a cold storage place. He worked there and he'd gone in there for some reason, just as everybody was leaving. Somehow he got locked in there, and he knew he wasn't going to be able to get out until the next morning when somebody came. Do you know what he did?

He was in there all alone but surrounded with great big blocks of ice. This was in the days when they used blocks of ice for cold storage. He decided that his life depended on activity, and he spent the night pushing those blocks of ice around.

And if you should chance to land in a frozen atmosphere, I suggest to you, friends, that instead of yielding to the influence of the icy environment, you get busy and keep warm by earnest activity and by earnest expression every chance you get.

Now, you know there *are* races of people who are quite expressive. I'm sure Elder Victor could tell us about some parts of the world where he's traveled where it's a common thing for a whole volley of "Amens" to be heard. Is that right? Yes. Do you like it, Elder? Of course, you do. Does the Lord like it? Well, He put it down here in His Book: "...Let all the people say, Amen..."

"As the word of life is spoken, let your heartfelt response testify that you receive the message as from heaven. This is very old-fashioned, I know..." *Testimonies for the Church, Volume 6, page 367.*

Yes it is, friends, *very* old-fashioned. It goes clear back to the Bible days:

"...But it will be a thank offering to God for the bread of life given to the hungry soul. This response to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit will be a strength to your own soul and an encouragement to others. It will give some evidence that there are in God's building living stones that emit light" *Ibid.*

Oh friends, I'd rather be in a *little* congregation with life than in a *great cathedral* with a thousand worshipers in a dead language droning over some formal worship. What do you say?

[Audience responds] Amen.

Thank God.

Now, here's something interesting on music. This is in the book *Evangelism*, page 510:

"Display is not religion nor sanctification. There is nothing more offensive in God's sight than a display of instrumental music when those taking part are not consecrated, are not making melody in their hearts to the Lord.

"...In some of our churches I have heard solos that were all together unsuitable for the service of the Lord's house. The long-drawn-out notes and the peculiar sounds common in operatic singing are not pleasing to the angels. They delight to hear the simple songs of praise sung in a natural tone. The songs in which every word is uttered clearly, in a musical tone, are the songs that they join us in singing"
Evangelism, page 510.

Paul says, "I will sing with the spirit and with the understanding." Now, he's talking about his own understanding, but I think we ought to take in the understanding of the audience, too, when we speak and when we sing. What do you say, friends? Yes.

"Ceremonies become multitudinous and extravagant as the vital principles of the kingdom of God are lost" *Ibid.*, page 511.

"Form and ceremony do not constitute the kingdom of God" *Ibid.*

May I tell you something? When I was a boy, a young man in the ministry, a Seventh-day Adventist minister could be into his sermon by 11:15. Do you remember that, Elder? It's a rare thing today if a man gets into his sermon before 11:30. What has happened? I leave you to think about it, my dear friends. I leave you to think about it.

How many times do we have to pray to God and ask Him to be with us in a service before we think that the message got through? I counted up one Sabbath morning, and from the time that the Sabbath school officers gathered in their little get-together before they went on the platform until the closing benediction, it was possible for one individual to participate in prayer 13 times. It isn't quite that much every time. Count it up.

And don't misunderstand me, friends. I'm not here to prescribe a form of worship. I'm dealing with some winds. And winds have an influence. I challenge you to study the experience and the spirit of the early church and the early Advent movement. We want to get back to Pentecost, don't we? We want to get back to the power of the Advent movement when God was filling and thrilling the hearts of His people with the visitations of His Spirit.

Let me share with you another interesting statement from *Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 523:

"Love to God is the very foundation of religion. To engage in His service merely from hope of reward or fear of punishment would avail nothing. Open apostasy would not be more offensive to God than hypocrisy and mere formal worship"
Patriarchs and Prophets, page 523.

You see the difference between formal worship and the kind that we're all wanting to enter into tonight is that, in God's plan of worship, what is moving everything and everybody? Love. And the other? It's that way because it's frozen. The form goes right along.

In the book *Gospel workers*, page 177, I read:

"High-flown language is inappropriate in prayer, whether the petition be offered in the pulpit, in the family circle, or in secret. Especially should the one offering public prayer use simple language, that others may understand what is said and unite with the petition" *Gospel Workers*, page 177.

"Prayers offered in public should be short and to the point"
Ibid., page 175.

May I tell you something interesting? (This really happened.) An evangelist of a generation ago was holding a large meeting in the city of Chicago. The man who had been asked to lead in prayer droned on and on and on. There was a young medical student who was clear in the back seat, and he got so weary with it that he got up to leave. But just as he did, the evangelist stepped forward and said, "Let us sing such and such a song while our brother concludes his prayer." And the young medical student was so impressed with it that he said, "I'll stay to hear that man."

And he did. The evangelist was Moody. The young medical student was Grenfell, who became the great missionary to Labrador. That meeting changed the course of his life. It was because *somebody* had enough of the unceremonial and the informal to break into a frozen thing that was just running on and on and on.

Brethren, when you pray, pray short and to the point, this says. May I impress your hearts with it? I read it here out of the book. There are some men that I love to hear pray because I know they're in touch with God. Oh, God help us to get to the fire of Pentecost. What do you say? Thank the Lord, friends.

Well, now I want to hear from *you* tonight because part of this matter of having the right *kind* of worship instead of formal worship is for the audience to participate, not merely by saying, "Amen" as the sermon or study is given, but by speaking from your own heart, in your own words, the praise of the Lord. *Early Writings*, page 114:

"All should have something to say for the Lord, for by so doing they will be blest... The remnant are to overcome by the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony. Some expect to overcome alone by the blood of the Lamb, without making any special effort of their own. I saw that God has been merciful in giving us the power of speech. He has given us a tongue, and we are accountable to Him for its use" *Early Writings*, page 114.

Read the whole chapter. Now, I'm sure that the icy winds of formalism are something that, tonight, we'd like to get away from. They are blowing, friends. But the way to keep from being frozen is to keep warm with the love of God and to keep active. A man out in a blinding blizzard can keep alive if he keeps active, right? If he yields to the tendency to just 'be comfortable,' God pity him.

And so, my dear friends, let us, every chance we have, let us ask God to help us express His praise and our love for Him, and make Him happy.

Who has a word right now to praise God?

[Testimony service]

Now dear people, remember this: the answer is not in substituting one kind of formalism for another. The thing which we've read here that is lacking in formal worship is the *love* of God. But rigid, frigid forms tend to discourage the individual response and the individual participation. Therefore, we need, first of all, to seek God in our own closet for a real experience, and then we need to come to Sabbath school and church and prayer meeting and every other meeting, to share, each in our own way, what God has given us in an individual experience with Him. Do you see? *This* is the life of the Christian religion—Jesus dwelling in the heart of each one.

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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