

# As the Garden

#0348

Study Given by W. D. Frazee—July 24, 1976

Before turning to any scripture, I would just like to talk with you a little. Let me ask a few questions. How many of you ever make a garden? May I see your hands? Well, most of you do. The rest help out by eating what's grown there, and that is an encouragement.

Did you ever hear of a garden club? Did any of you ever read any books about gardening? Are any of you interested in government bulletins that describe better ways of gardening? You folks that are really interesting in gardening, when your friends come around, do you ever talk about gardening?

Now, I want to ask you my next question. How many garden clubs does it take, how many books read, how many discussions about gardening does it take to grow a cabbage or a carrot or a potato? Would 100,000 confabs, get-togethers, discussions, lectures, even if they were illustrated on the screen with beautiful movies, would 100,000 of those put together ever grow anything?

[Audience] No.

You're all agreed with me on that, aren't you?

Well, what on earth are they for? Well, they're for two things. They're to inspire and encourage people to get out with their tools and work, and they are to suggest better methods. Is that right? That's what they're for. But the only thing that grows gardens is to be out there with the tools and do the work.

Now, the strange thing is this. Everybody knows what I've just said. But when it comes to spiritual things, we're inclined to forget all of that and to suppose that if we have enough lectures on how to garden spiritually, we'll get a garden. But it's just as fruitless spiritually as it is physically. That's what I want to have you meditate with me about this morning.

Suppose that this building, instead of being a church, were an assembly hall of some kind, a community gathering place. And suppose every week, 52 weeks in the year, we had a meeting here, we'll say like on Monday night. And we came together, and every Monday night we had a lecture on gardening. Then, we'd go home but not and raise any gardens, you understand. We'd just go on with whatever we were doing.

But next Monday night, sure enough, faithfully we all turn up, and we hear another lecture on gardening, maybe have some pictures, maybe some discussions. Maybe a government agent comes and tells us more about gardening. And we do that every Monday night for 52 weeks. What have we got to show for it? Just about as much as some people have to show for their going to church and Sabbath School, my dear friends, just about as much. And some people wonder why religion doesn't work. Well, my dear friends, religion works provided we follow the directions. But religion won't grow a spiritual garden any more than attending lectures on gardening will grow a literal garden.

The purpose of being here in the house of God today is to help you and me to do two things: to be inspired to grow a spiritual garden in our lives and to learn better what tools to use and what seeds and all the rest.

But if we merely get inspired, enthused, thinking, "Oh, now I'm going to do it!" and then we go home and don't do it, all we'll have will be what?

What is it grows without any effort, cultivation or attention? What is it? Weeds. And then, we can blame it on the preacher, or blame it on the church, or in some moment of discouragement blame it on God, but none of them are necessarily responsible, friend.

Religion, true religion, is just as scientific as agriculture. And the laws of Christ's kingdom in the natural world and in the spiritual world are settled, they are simple, and they are so arranged that you and I can have a part to act.

Now, I want to read what I've just been talking with you about out of the Bible, Isaiah the 61<sup>st</sup> chapter, and the 11<sup>th</sup> verse. And I invite you to turn to it because I want you to see that it's here on the inspired page. I didn't make it up.

And you who find it first, will you tell me what the second word is? "As." What does that mean? Well, it means like, in a similar way. Two things are being compared here. One is how things grow in a literal garden, and the other is how they grow in our spiritual gardens, our lives. I read:

"For as the earth bringeth forth her bud, and as the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth; so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations" Isaiah 61:11.

How does God produce righteousness in the lives of His people? As the garden. The same laws run through the natural world and the spiritual world. Do you want to be righteous? Well, here's the recipe. Do you want your life to reveal the beauty of God's way, the glory of His character? Here's the program:

"...As the garden..." Isaiah 61:11.

“For as the earth bringeth forth her bud, and as the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth; so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations” Isaiah 61:11.

Somebody says, “Brother Frazee, are you suggesting that there’s something for *us* to do about all this?”

That’s exactly what I’m suggesting. You got my thought exactly.

“Oh,” but somebody says, “that sounds to me like legalism.”

Well, let’s look at it a little.

“I believe in righteousness by *faith*.”

Yes, that’s right, righteousness by faith. We’ll look at that a little.

Suppose somebody says, “I believe in righteousness by faith, and I think if you make any effort that spoils it all. God has to do the whole thing.”

May I say, and I say it reverently but to the point, try that on your garden, just try that on your garden.”

Suppose a man comes into our garden club, and he gives a testimony something like this.

He says, “You know, last year I tried and I tried, and it seemed to me the weeds got ahead of me. And this year I’ve decided since it’s God that grows the stuff anyway, I’m just quitting, and I’m going to leave it all to Him.”

What would he have? More weeds, correct?

You say, “But oh, this is something different.”

That’s the problem, dear friends. People think it’s so different that it’s like life on another planet. But the Lord Jesus came down from heaven to show us how to live the life of heaven here on earth. And He did it by cooperating with His Father in working out the plans that heaven had laid. And you and I, praise God, can be successful like He was successful if we’ll follow the directions.

And do you know one of the reasons why God has suggested that it’s good for all of us to have a part in gardening, in growing food? It isn’t just because we get some very beneficial exercise that way. That’s one thing. It isn’t just so we can enjoy the food

fresh from the garden. And isn't it good? The string beans and the tomatoes and all the rest? Those are all good reasons, but there is a greater reason, a deeper reason.

God intends that through cooperating with Him in growing food from the soil, we shall learn how to cooperate with Him in growing the graces of heaven in our lives. That's what he intends. And I repeat, the same principles run through all, and that's what we just read from the Bible.

I wonder, would you read it with me again? Isaiah 61:11, all together:

“For as the earth bringeth forth her bud, and as the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth; so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations” Isaiah 61:11.

So, what we need, dear friends, is to look more closely at this picture of how we are to work with Jesus in the garden of our lives, in the garden of our lives.

“Ah,” somebody says, “but Brother Frazee, doesn't Jesus say, ‘Without me ye can do nothing’? What's the use for me to try? I know I can't do it anyway. So I'll just let go and let God.”

Let's see, does the Bible say, “...Without me ye can do nothing” (John 15:5)? Is that what it says? How many of you think that's in the Bible? [An audience member replies inaudibly.] Well, what do the rest of you think? Let's find out, see if it's in the Bible. Let's turn over to John the 15<sup>th</sup> chapter and the 5<sup>th</sup> verse and look at the last line. What does it say?

“...For without Me ye can do nothing” John 15:5.

Then, the man is right that says, as he quotes the dear Lord, “...Without Me ye can do nothing” (John 15:5). Well, how much can I do without him?

[Audience] Nothing

“Well then, I better just quit trying and let Him do it all.”

Now, it might be a good idea to look at the whole text. Let's see what Jesus is seeking to tell us. Let's see whether He's trying to tell us that there's no use of thinking we can ever do anything. Let's see whether that's His purpose:

“I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without Me ye can do nothing” John 15:5.

Was His purpose, then, to make us satisfied with no fruit? Was that His purpose? Why no, just the opposite. He wants us to bring in bushels of potatoes and bushels of string beans and bushels of tomatoes. He wants us to have abundant crops.

And so, He tells us, “Don’t try to do it without Me because without Me ye can do...” what? “Nothing” [a paraphrase of John 15:5].

But He doesn’t say, “Just come over here and sit down in the shade and just enjoy watching Me while I do the work.”

No, He doesn’t say that. No, that isn’t the way we grow grapes, is it? And He’s talking about grape growing here:

“I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without Me...” John 15:5.

Or as the margin says:

“...severed from Me, ye can do nothing” John 15:5 [marginal reading].

By the way, in our physical gardens, our literal gardens out here on the hillside, how much can we do in growing gardens without God?

[Audience] Nothing.

What does God do? Well, in the first place, He provides the soil. Anything else?

[Audience] The sun and the rain.

The sun and the rain.

And as somebody has said, “All sun makes a desert, and all rain makes a swamp.”

It would be pretty hard to grow a garden in either one, wouldn’t it? And so, when it’s raining, we ask God sometimes to send the sunshine, and sometimes when it’s been a while, we pray for rain. Without God’s sunshine and rain, all our hoeing and cultivating wouldn’t produce a single bit of garden.

But there’s more to it than that. Whose power is it that causes those tiny seeds to sprout and grow? That is the power of God. Just as my heart is kept beating by the constant exercise of divine power, so every seed sprouts, every bud opens, by the immediate act and agency of God.

This is a fact, my dear friends. Infidels may scoff at it. Skeptics may smile in a sophisticated way. But this is the truth. So, it is literally true that every growing plant is an act of God, in a sense a miracle. And yet, we usually use the word (when we use it rightly, that word “miracle”), we use it to apply to unusual and extraordinary acts of God.

For example, take this very thing of growing grapes. You remember that the first miracle of Jesus, as recorded in the Gospel of John the second chapter, was at the wedding in Cana of Galilee. There, as the festivities went on, it was discovered that the wine was running low. And the mother of Jesus spoke to Him about it. And Christ, always anxious to make people happy, He used the power of the Creator.

And what method did He use to do it? He said to the servants, “Fill these waterpots with water” [a paraphrase of John 2:7].

And when they were filled, He said, “Now, draw out and carry this to the governor of the feast” [a paraphrase of John 2:8].

They poured water in; they poured fresh, delicious grape juice out. There God made grape juice in a moment, just like that. And human beings didn’t have to plant the vines, nor prune them. They didn’t have to cultivate the vineyard, nothing of the kind. All they did, they poured in the water, and out came the wine. Wouldn’t you like to garden that way? Wouldn’t that be nice? No, it wouldn’t, dear friends. If it was really nicer than the way we do it, God would arrange it that way.

I’m so glad that God gives me something to do in cooperating with Him. What do you say? Isn’t it a thrill to come out and see the seeds sprouting as they push the dirt up? Isn’t it a joy to watch the first buds open out on the different plants, the strawberries or the tomatoes or the fruit trees? And isn’t it a joy to watch the fruit ripening, the crops developing, and then share with God in the joy of the harvest?

I’m so glad the same dear Lord that did it in a moment there at Cana of Galilee does it in cooperation with you and me over a period of weeks and months. And He gives us something to do about it.

And so it is in our spiritual experience, dear friends. God wants us to be very practical in our religion. The Devil’s effort is to make it theoretical and to get us discussing a lot of theological theories and never apply them. In other words, he’s content for us to attend garden clubs and listen to lectures about gardening as long as we never go home and stir the ground and put the seed in. Do you see?

Do you ever hear of somebody that wished that he could spend more time in Bible study and prayer?

“Well,” you say, “Brother Frazee, sure, everybody does.”

How much time would you like to spend?

“Oh,” somebody says, “I wish I could spend twice as much time as I spend in Bible study and prayer.”

How many hours a day would you like to spend? Wouldn't it be wonderful if we could just spend all our time or nearly all of it? We'd probably like to take out a little time to eat, wouldn't we? Wouldn't it be nice if the angels would wash the dishes and grow the food and serve it to us? And then, we could just spend all our time in Bible study and prayer. We'd get ready for heaven fast, wouldn't we? No. We'd get ready for hell fast, my friends.

God says through Ezekiel:

“Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fullness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy” Ezekiel 16:49.

Do you know why God has arranged it so that so much of our time has to be spent in actually *doing* things with our mind and muscle? Because—don't miss it—this is the way that character is developed. Just sitting and reading a book, a good book, even the Bible, does not in itself develop character, any more than reading books about gardening grows a garden.

You say, “Brother Frazee, are you suggesting that if I could just read the Bible eight, ten, twelve hours a day that it wouldn't get me ready for heaven?”

That's exactly what I'm telling you. Any more than sitting down and eating at the table eight, ten, twelve hours a day would make a muscular giant out of you. It might add to your weight, but not to your strength. Do you see what I'm getting at, dear friends? God has arranged it that we shall have the opportunity to make a practical application of what we read in the Bible and the other inspired messages.

Oh, I long that every one of us shall fully appreciate this. And if we do, somebody here this morning is going home to do something about their spiritual garden. And they're going to understand that coming here to church, no matter how often you come and no matter how long you come, it will never in itself and by itself get you ready for heaven. All it can do is tell you how to do it. You'll have to do it.

Now, let me prove what I've just said to you. The Lord Jesus 2,000 years ago left heaven and came down here and took on our humanity. He was born a little baby there in Bethlehem; when just a little lad, they moved back to Nazareth. And there, He grew up in a simple home.

Suppose you had visited the home of Jesus when He was 11 years old, 14 years old, or 17, or 21, or 25, or 28, or was Jesus in Nazareth during all those years? Was

He? Yes, He was. Wasn't He off somewhere getting ready for some great thing? No. He was right there.

Suppose you had visited him, where would you have found Him? You all know where you would have found Him. During much of the day, you'd have found Him where? In the carpentry shop. Well, were they so short on carpenters that they had to get the Son of God down there to make chairs and tables and yokes? Was that the problem? I wonder why Jesus spent so much time in the carpentry shop.

There, when he was 12, 15, 18, 25, 28, 29, finally when he's 30 years old, after at least 20 years in the carpentry shop, He goes down and is baptized and receives the anointing of the Spirit and enters upon His public work.

But I ask again and I press the point, why did He spend so much time in the carpentry shop? And by the way, did He have any other work besides the carpentry shop? Did He work at home? Did He help his father and mother with the chores? Yes.

Now, do you know, a lot of people—don't miss this—if they were planning to get *their* child ready to be a great preacher, or a great teacher, or a great doctor, they wouldn't do it that way?

They'd say, "Oh well, John has a great career before him. He doesn't have time to be spending here just working. Anybody can do that. My John, he's somebody special, you understand. So what are we going to do for *him*?"

"Well, we're going to put his nose in a book. And we're going to have him read and study and study and read, and read and study and study and read, and finally, he'll be able to pass the examinations. And then, he'll be somebody."

Did the Father in heaven have some great plans for Jesus? Was He to be a preacher? The world's greatest. Was He to be a teacher? The world's greatest. Was He to be a physician? The world's greatest.

So, you may not understand all that I'm saying, friends. I don't understand it all myself, but I believe it because that's what it says. Thank God, I believe a number of things I can't understand. I believe what my Father in heaven says. And He tells me that He sent His Son down here into this world to show us how to live.

And my dear friends, if you and I ever have a part in that group that follow the Lamb wherever He goes in the future life, we'll first follow Him here. If we ever have a part in giving the Loud Cry under the Latter Rain, we must first go through an experience of applying religion to the practical problems of daily life. We must come to understand that the time spent in hoeing the corn and washing the dishes, in minding the baby, in keeping the books, in sweeping the floor, in driving nails and sawing boards, that this time is just as important in our character building as when we sit down



around the family altar and read the Bible and pray and sing. It all is part of one program.

When we get this view, my dear friend, we shall not look upon religion as something that is confined to or largely concerned with a meeting here in this house of worship. We shall understand that the great purpose of coming to the house of God is to get information and instruction about how to go home and grow a garden, a spiritual garden at home; how to have our lives and our family live here on earth the life of heaven.

And this is why God, in His great mercy, has given the remnant church along with the Bible 50,000 pages of inspired instruction, manna from heaven, the Spirit of Prophecy.

Take this book, the *Adventist Home*, or *Child Guidance*, *Messages to Young People*, *Ministry of Healing*, *Counsels to Parents, Teachers and Students*, *Education*, *Christ's Object Lessons*, the nine volumes of the *Testimonies*. What are they for? They are instructions on how to grow a garden spiritually and practically. They're instruction on how to live in our homes, how to meet the problems of discipline, of child training, what to do with our time, how to spend our money, what to do for recreation, our diet, our dress. Oh, how many hundreds and thousands of details are covered.

But remember, having a book about gardening on the table doesn't mean that you get any food on the table. It's what you *do* with that book about gardening as you read it. If it summons you to effort, if you go out and stir the soil, put the seed in, see that the weeds are kept out, thank God, you and the Lord will have a harvest.

And so, this morning I want to ask you, friends, do you see that when Jesus says, "...Without Me ye can do nothing" (John 15:5), He's not trying to tell us to *do* nothing. He's trying to show us how we can do everything He wants us to do through faith in Him and cooperation with Him. Do you see?

Oh, is there somebody here this morning that as you see the glorious vision, you're determined by God's help to make Him happy by working with Him in a practical way? You're determined to take up the duties of daily life, spending the time you need day by day in prayer and study, but when you've prayed and studied, then go to work to do what you read and study about.

Is there somebody here this morning that says, "Brother Frazee, this message was for me, and by God's grace, I'm going to do something about it"?

May I see your hands? Thank the Lord, thank the Lord. Each one is precious to Jesus.

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